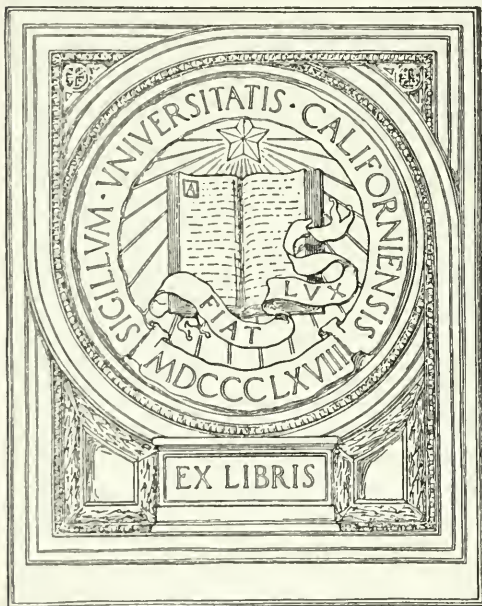


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ROBERT ERNEST COWAN



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**G
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LESSER

LIGHTS

.

By "KIM BILIR."

Author of "Three Letters of Credit," "As It Was
In The Fifties."



VICTORIA, B.C.,
THE PROVINCE PUBLISHING COMPANY.
1895.

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Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada in the year 1895 by
the Province Publishing Company at the Department of Agriculture.

To Gemini.

The despots' heels are on my shore,
 Gemini, by Gemini !
They creep and crawl along my floor ;
 Gemini, by Gemini !
Domestic peace away has flown,
And I still sadder, wiser grown,
Resign in favour of my own
 Gemini, by Gemini.

I seek in vain of " Heavenly Twins,"
 Gemini, oh Gemini !
An explanation of your sins,
 Gemini, my Gemini !
For when I ask them if on high
They make things lively in the sky,
They seem to wink the other eye.
 Gemini, oh Gemini.

And yet upon so strange a plan
 Gemini, by Gemini !
Is built the wayward heart of man ;
 Gemini, by Gemini !
Despite your clamours for supplies,
In ratio inverse to your size,
I would not have you otherwise
 Gemini, my Gemini.

VICTORIA, B.C. August 1895.

These stories were published in THE PROVINCE and I am indebted to the proprietors of that paper for permission to publish them in book form.

KIM BILIR.

GEMINI.

NAPOLEON was the name of one, Justinian of the other. They were twins, but they were not heavenly. As infants, they had doubtless been beautiful in the eyes of their mother some seventeen years before : but not subsequently in the eyes of anybody else. At the time that I knew them they offered no outward and visible signs of physical allurements, for one had a decided cast in his eye, and the other was bow-legged as ever was Quilp. They had no special educational attainments to boast of. I know that they could not spell, and I expect, if the truth were known, that they laboured under the impression that their celebrated namesakes of a by-gone age had been twins, even as they were themselves. Such nationality as they possessed pertained to the French Republic, but though they owed allegiance to La Belle France, they probably had the haziest idea as to her geographical whereabouts, and certainly their knowledge of their mother-tongue was of the most limited description.

They spoke the *Chattera pattera* or *lingua franca* common to the Levant, and they resided on the shores of the Bosphorus in the village wherein they had been born. Moreover they were orphans and picked up a precarious livelihood at the houses of their sisters, their cousins and their aunts, who were fortunately as kind-hearted as they were numerous.

Despite the foregoing and other trifling disadvantages too numerous to mention, the twins had qualities as you shall presently see. It is only fair, however, to remark that up to the time of my story none of their acquaintances, myself included, ever entertained the mildest suspicion as to their existence. They were keen and ardent sportsmen, and knew every nook and cranny of the hills within a radius of fifteen miles of their village. Equipped with the meanest accoutrements, and the scantiest stock of ammunition they invariably contrived to render a better account of their day's sport than anybody else, hammerless guns and the last thing out in porpoise-hide shooting-boots notwithstanding.

It was after the war in 1878. One of the effects of this terrible conflict had been that the entire Musselman population of Bulgaria had been driven like a flock of panic-stricken sheep in front of the victorious Russians. They had taken refuge in the capital, and thence had been drafted off in various directions, as time and opportunity offered, to shift for themselves

and as it frequently happened to die. Some of them, the least desirable characters of the lot, who probably in the matter of brigandage had maintained their *status quo ante bellum*, had located themselves amongst the hills overlooking the Bosphorus, where they speedily earned the most unenviable of reputations.

The twins, on their return from one of their expeditions, described how they had seen some half-dozen of the *Mohadjirs*, as they were called, from a vantage-ground on the top of a hill. The *Mohadjirs* were in a ravine several miles nearer civilization than they were generally supposed to be. The word was passed round, and it was tacitly agreed that the region in which they had been seen had better be avoided for the season, and the boys themselves were warned by their relatives that they should on no account venture in that direction again.

Napoleon and Justinian, however, brooked not control where their favorite pastime was concerned. They had never had such sport as they had enjoyed in the tabooed region, and, consequently, they made up their minds that, *coute que coute*, *Mohadjirs* or no *Mohadjirs* they would have another raid upon the woodcock. They were bound too to get the cock pheasant they had seen but missed, for a cock pheasant is a *rara avis* indeed in those parts.

A few days afterwards I happened to be going for a

ride and was just mounting my horse when the old *Bekji* of the village, who corresponds as nearly as possible to the watchman of our grandfathers' time, came past and asked me if I had heard the news. I told him "No," whereupon he informed me that the twins had that moment arrived in the village with the astounding information that they had had an encounter with the *Mohadjirs* and had killed two of them. It appeared that a consultation was being held in the *caffinet* of the village, a sort of general *rendezvous* where municipal affairs were discussed and innumerable cigarettes and arguments indulged in. I galloped off, to find quite a crowd had collected round the two boys, and this was the story they told.

They had gone out shooting early that morning on their rat-like Roumelian ponies, as was their wont, and had arrived within a mile of the place where, a day or two previously, they had seen the *Mohadjirs*. They had had excellent sport, as six brace of woodcock, a couple of hares and the longed for pheasant which they had brought home with them testified. They were having their lunch about eleven, for they had been out since long before dawn, sitting down on the outskirts of a small wood with their loaded guns beside them; when suddenly, without any further warning than a growl from their old pointer Azor, a couple of men sprang out upon them and seized their guns. They were too much astonished and taken by

surprise either to offer any resistance or to make any remark. All apparently that the *Mohadjirs* wanted was the boys' guns and ammunition. The latter they told them to hand over, and hardly knowing what they did the boys unbuckled their cartridge belts and gave them to the men who thereupon disappeared into the wood. Upon recovering from their astonishment the twins, according to their own account, took council together. They felt that a terrible thing had happened to them.

"You see," said Napoleon, the man of war, "this is a very serious matter. We shall never be able to go back without our guns. We should be disgraced forever, and I, for one, should never be able to look anybody in the face again. We shall have to get back our guns if we die in the attempt."

Justinian, who, as his name implies, was naturally inclined to take a more judicial view of the proceedings, was prepared to argue the point, and ventured to put before his bellicose brother the terrible disadvantages under which they laboured. It was true they had one hunting-knife between them, but the *Mohadjirs* possessed two double-barrelled guns apiece, their own and the boys, and a perfect arsenal of small-arms in the shape of revolvers and yataghans of murderous description stuffed into their waistbands to boot.

Nothing however could shake Napoleon's determination, and it was finally agreed that they should

forthwith proceed to track the brigands and rob the robbers, Justinian obtaining the concession as a compromise that Azor the old pointer should be sent home, so that they might know from his arrival in the village that something had gone wrong. Azor, an obedient hound, accordingly trotted off home.

The first part of the undertaking was no difficult matter to the twins, versed as they were in woodcraft. They proceeded stealthily through the wood, along the track of the two men, and after about an hour's walk Justinian took the precaution of mounting a tree in the hope of catching sight of them.

On the opposite side of the ravine he saw two men engaged in the same occupation at which they had disturbed the twins so unceremoniously, namely, eating their mid-day meal of bread and black olives. The boys held another council of war and decided that by making a *detour* of about half a mile they would be able to take the robbers in the rear. Their minds were fully made up; they meant to get back their guns by fair means or by foul, or die in the attempt. They instantly proceeded therefore to put their plan into execution, and in another quarter of an hour they found themselves in the wood immediately behind the *Mohadjirs*. Quietly they stole along, Napoleon leading. Just as he was about to spring out on the brigands a broken twig betrayed his presence and the men started to their feet. The guns were lying

beside them on the ground, just as the boys' had been. In the twinkling of an eye the twins seized hold of their weapons. But Justinian's foot slipped and in falling he stumbled against one of the brigands' guns which was leaning against a tree. It fell in such a position that the *Mohadjir* was unable readily to lay his hand upon it. He called out to his companion "Shoot the young Christian dog," and the other *Mohadjir*, in compliance with this amiable request, drew a bead upon Napoleon. "Fire at him," screamed Justinian, and Napoleon fired.

His would-be assassin fell dead at his feet. The other *Mohadjir* drew his revolver but he was not quick enough and the contents of Napoleon's second barrel stretched him alongside his companion.

The twins now thought it was time to make tracks for their ponies and get home as quickly as possible. They overtook old Azor, who was taking things easily, and arrived about half-past two in the afternoon. They told their story in the plain, matter of fact way I have described, always harping upon the impossibility of supporting the disgrace under which they would have laboured by re-appearing without their guns.

Meanwhile the Turkish *Anbashi* (Commander of Ten), Chief Commissioner of Police, Attorney-General, Magistrate, and Justice of the Peace for the village, all rolled into one, who had been engaged in his usual occupation of smoking a *narghileh* with his

boots off, in dreamy contemplation of nothing in particular, woke up to the fact that something unusual had happened, and when a Turkish official wakes up—a phenomenon of rare occurrence—it is extremely difficult to get him off to sleep again. So, unfortunately, it proved in this case. Salem Agha's dignity had asserted itself and he insisted on the most searching investigation being made into the affair. He even threatened to arrest the twins on the charge of murder in the first degree, on their own confession. We all naturally demurred, and finally the representative of the law was induced by considerations, into the nature of which I need not enter, to hold an inquiry on the spot; for some of us found considerable difficulty in crediting the assertions made by the twins, so extraordinary did they seem. Having sat fat old Salem Agha on horseback, a mode of progression he particularly disliked, half a dozen of us cantered him off in company with the boys to the scene of action, some eight or ten miles away. We had no time to lose for the month was November and the days were none too long.

About half an hour before sunset we arrived at the place described by the twins, having to leave our horses on the outskirts of the wood owing to the thickness of the undergrowth. In the ravine, sure enough, just as the twins told us, we found the two *Mohadjirs*, one dead and the other severely wounded, but still

alive. It took us several hours to transport them to the village ; the wounded man groaning piteously and evidently suffering great pain in the rude litter we had brought with us.

The dead body was taken to the *koolook* (police station) and the wounded man to the doctor's house, where his wounds were dressed.

The same evening, while Salem Agha was making up his dilatory mind whether he should or should not arrest them, the twins were sent, as a matter of precaution, to the French consulate, as we were not without fear that Salem Agha might decide in the affirmative and hand them over to the Turkish authorities ; in which case a great deal of time might have elapsed, and a great deal of trouble have been incurred, before we saw them again.

An investigation was made under the auspices of the French consul, although not of an official nature ; and in the course of the enquiry a most remarkable piece of circumstantial evidence came to light, which confirmed in every particular the story told by the boys.

Their statement, it will be remembered, was to the effect that Napoleon had shot both the *Mohadjirs* in self-defence, and had fired on them while they were in the act of aiming at him. It was found that the barrel of the first man's gun was scratched from muzzle to stock by the marks of shot ; that the top of

his right thumb and the back of his left hand had been riddled with shot, and the rest of the charge had lodged in his right eye. With his other barrel, Napoleon had fired at the second *Mohadjir*; several of the shot had entered the muzzle of the revolver and had severely wounded the right hand of the man who held it, while the rest of the charge had buried itself in his chest. The wounded brigand recovered consciousness, though never sufficiently to be able to give any account of the transaction, and died on the following day. This practically, as we say in this country, "let the boys out."

The matter was hushed up, owing in some measure to influence brought to bear through the French embassy, and also to the fact that it was acknowledged by the authorities that the two *Mohadjirs* in question were notably bad characters.

The twins appeared to be in no sense elated, perturbed, or in any way affected by the tragic circumstances of the case, and it was believed that the spiritual ministrations of a certain excellent Jesuit father, which were enlisted on their behalf, in the hope of inducing regret that they should have been the means of taking human life, proved absolutely of no avail. Argument, expostulation and entreaty were alike powerless to convince them that the proposition that they could, by any manner of means or under any circumstances whatsoever, have returned

home without their guns, was a tenable one.

During my subsequent intercourse with the twins I treated them with great respect.



THREE ONES.



IT used to be a grand and a glorious thing, at a certain period in the career of a British naval officer, to get what are called "Three Ones." Not being a naval man myself, I do not know exactly what the particular distinction implied by these numerals may be, but I am given to understand that it corresponds more or less to a brand of extra superfine excellence such as three stars in the line of *cognacs* or three X's in double stouts. But this was many years ago. Now-a-days I believe the highest award has been extended to five, and the sub-lieutenant who gets Five Ones in passing out of Greenwich is a very superior person indeed. "Five," however, is a modern innovation in no way affecting my tale, which is strictly confined to "Three."

Twenty years ago Fred Christian, R. N., was a "Three One-er," a past master in the art of all that pertained to guns, torpedoes and other horrible

engines of war, who knew, moreover, all that was worth knowing about seamanship—a man with a career before him, bound to be an admiral in time and generally to distinguish himself.

When therefore a formidable-looking document O. H. M. S. arrived for Lieutenant Frederick Christian, R.N., H.M.S. *Rossinante*, Plymouth, informing him that he had been “lent” by the English Admiralty to the Turkish government as special torpedo and gunnery instructor, with the rank of a post captain, at a salary of £100 a month and for three years, which period would count as full “sea time” he pretended, although the announcement in reality took his breath away, that he wasn’t in the least surprised, and graciously signified his intention of accepting the appointment. That is one of the advantages possessed by Anglo-Saxon origin over other forms of ancestry. It enables you to accept and assimilate the extremes of success and failure altogether as a matter of course, as if you were to the manner born and required no intermediate training. Other nations look on in wonderment and are consumed with jealousy at this admirable trait in our character, which they call “*le flegme anglais*.”

Fred Christian’s messmates took it very well. His appointment reflected honour, in the first place on “the service” in the second upon “the ship,” and in the third it afforded opportunity for thundering jollification in the ward-room at Fred’s expense. His

wine bill alone during the week prior to his departure, to say nothing of the banquet on the evening preceding it, made a considerable hole in his first month's salary under the new arrangement. But what of it? We don't get appointments, even in H.M.'s navy, worth a hundred pounds a month every day in the week, and when we do we should be more than human and certainly less than British did we not celebrate the event in the cup which cheers and also inebriates.

The manner of Fred Christian's appointment had been in this wise:—The English Ambassador to the Porte, acting on instructions from his government, had called the serious attention of the Sultan to the necessity of setting his house in order. His Majesty had been given to understand that the Bulgarian atrocity racket must really be put a stop to, or at any rate that reports of a harrassing and distressing nature should be kept out of the press and at all costs from the ears of the Right Honourable the then Leader of the Opposition, who had a nasty knack, about this period, of making disturbing and inflammatory speeches on the subject which were anything but agreeable to Her Majesty's government. Thereupon His Imperial Majesty had sent for His Highness the Grand Vizier and issued his Imperial instructions, which were to the effect that something must immediately be done. The Turkish *gendarmerie* was the outcome of this interview. But of that anon. It

referred to the quasi-military aspect of the question. But there was the other and equally important one of the navy, which could not be overlooked. The Turks possessed seven or eight extremely imposing looking iron-clads which every year executed the complicated manœuvre of getting up steam and sailing from their anchorage in the Golden Horn to their summer moorings opposite the Sultan's palace on the Bosphorus, a distance of some three-quarters of a mile ; invariably colliding with the bridge through which they passed *in transitu* and causing other material damage amongst the shipping, to the no small profit of local legal lights.

"You will have to get someone to look after the torpedoes," said His Imperial Majesty. "I am told that they pay a great deal of attention to this branch of naval tactics, whatever it may be, in Europe. We will ask the English government to lend us a man. Give him full wages and see that proper notices are telegraphed to Europe. That will keep them quiet, at any rate for a time."

So it came to pass that the English Admiralty was communicated with through the Turkish Embassy in London, and Mr. Fred Christian, being the man of the day, was duly selected for the post. He started within eight days of receiving the appointment—as soon, that is to say, as the requisite formalities could be completed—and posted as fast as ex-

press trains could take him across the continent to Varna ; thence by steamer to the Turkish capital.

He brought all sorts of letters of introduction and recommendation, amongst them one to your most obedient and humble servant, who immediately put him up at the club.

Within twenty-four hours of his arrival Christian had made enormous strides in social progress. He was a delightful person, good-looking, clever and the smartest of officers. We all thought so, but we also felt that he laboured under one terrible defect. He was consumed with the zeal of his profession. This made us smile at the club, not out of ill-nature but out of pity. We had seen this sort of thing before and knew exactly how it would end. But Fred Christian was innocent as the babe unborn. He had driven to the Turkish Admiralty the very instant he had set foot on shore to report his arrival, and was not in the least disconcerted at finding nobody there. The interpreter he had taken with him had told him the minister had left instructions for him to call again at three in the afternoon !

He had visions of the great and ennobling work that he was commissioned, and moreover felt himself perfectly adequate, to perform. Such an opportunity had rarely fallen to the lot of a young fellow of twenty-eight before, and he meant to turn it to the fullest possible account.

He would regenerate, rejuvenate and reorganize the Turkish navy, and his name would be handed down to posterity as the greatest naval reformer of modern times. He was the living personification of energy, activity and zeal.

We begged him not to be in too great a hurry ; assured him that there was no earthly occasion to move faster than an ordinary walk ; that the Turkish Admiralty would not run away ; that his appointment was for three years and that he really had plenty of time.

But he said this was just like Englishmen who had lived so long in the effete East, who had lost their energy and were imbued with the fatal *laissez aller* principles which animated the natives. In fact, he rated us rather soundly, and if he had not been such a good fellow we might have said something in reply. But we didn't. As it was, we only asked him to have another drink. He said he could not ; he had not time ; he had an appointment with the Minister of Marine and was bound to be punctual. This was immediately after lunch. His appointment with the Minister was for three o'clock. I met him in the club about six. He was still radiant.

"Well, Christian," I said, "how did you get along ? Did you see the Minister ?"

"No," he said, "I could not see the Minister, but I saw a perfectly charming *aide-de-camp*, Ferik Bey,

who speaks English as well as you do. He is an awfully nice fellow." (I knew Ferik Bey.) "He told me that the Minister was very sorry he could not see me to-day, as he had to attend a meeting of the Council of State; but he hoped I would make it convenient to go down there to-morrow. They are very polite, these Turks, aren't they?" (I had had some experience of Turkish politeness.) "Ferik Bey gave me the most delicious cigarettes I ever smoked and insisted on my drinking several cups of coffee. Rum stuff, that Turkish coffee, isn't it? I got all the grains in my mouth, but I suppose one gets used to it after a time."

Christian was perfectly right. He became quite an adept in the art of drinking Turkish coffee before he was through with the Minister of Marine.

"By the bye," he said, "I asked Ferik Bey what time His Excellency the Minister would like to see me, and he said any time I liked. Awfully considerate, these fellows, aren't they? Doesn't seem to be anything like the red tape out here that there is at home."

I entirely agreed with him, and we went and played a game of billiards.

The next evening I met Christian in the same place. It struck me that he did not look quite so jubilant as the day before, and with forethought borne of experience I did not ask him if he had seen the Minister. I

knew that he hadn't, and further that he would report progress if I left him alone.

"They seem to be tremendously busy down at the Admiralty," he said, over a whiskey and soda, after he had beaten me by forty out of a hundred.

"The Minister could not see me to-day. Ferik told me he was very sorry, but there was some commission going on down there which occupied him the whole day, and said I had better come next Monday." (This was Thursday evening.) "Ferik Bey is going to take me to the Sweet Waters of Europe to-morrow. Saturday he said was an off day at the Admiralty, and of course the next day is Sunday; but I shall see him on Monday and get to work."

We were quite friendly by this time, and in the course of conversation I took upon myself to inquire whether his contract was in perfect order, and was glad to find, on his showing it to me, that he was to draw his pay through the State Bank and was not to be dependant upon the Turkish Treasury. There it was in black and white—one hundred pounds a month in gold sovereigns. Really, he was a very fortunate fellow. The prospect of "getting to work," as he called it, had quite an exhilarating effect upon him, and we spent a charming evening.

The next day Ferik Bey called for him at the club as arranged, and we all three rode out to the Sweet Waters of Europe, the weekly resort of the rank and

fashion of Turkish society. He came back positively entranced with the beauty of the scene he had witnessed. Both banks of the winding river gay with Turkish carpets and brightly attired Turkish women ; crowds on horseback, crowds in carriages and crowds in *caiques* upon the water. He had never seen anything to equal it before and felt that his sojourn in the East had begun under the most agreeable auspices.

Saturday and Sunday were spent in making friends and acquaintances and in delivering his letters of introduction ; and when Monday morning came he repaired to the Admiralty, fully determined to get to work without a moment's further delay. But the Minister was not there, nor was Ferik Bey.

For six long, weary hours he kicked his heels in the wide, cool corridors of the Admiralty building, without being able to speak a word of the language, and finding no one to talk to. He looked quite unhappy when we met in the club, but I consoled him as best I could. The Minister was doubtless ill, and Ferik was looking after him ! Such things did happen occasionally, even in the best regulated admiralties.

But I could see that Christian did not like it. He even went to the extent of saying that it was not business, and that he had not come out to a foreign land to kick his heels all day long amongst a crowd of the great unwashed.

Quite a number of people in addition to myself smiled when they heard this remark ; but, perhaps fortunately for us, Lieutenant Christian did not notice it.

He went down to the Admiralty again next day, but he did not see the Minister. He was there but he was busy ; and Ferik Bey, on his behalf, expressed the keenest regret that he should have been debarred from the pleasure of seeing Lieutenant Christian the day before, but he had unfortunately been confined to the house by temporary indisposition. He found it would be impossible to make a definite appointment before that day week ; though if Lieutenant Christian liked to come down to the Admiralty any day before then, on the chance of seeing him, His Excellency would be delighted to meet him should the opportunity arise. Meanwhile His Excellency hoped the financial arrangements through the bank were entirely to Lieutenant Christian's satisfaction.

Christian walked all the way back to the club ; through the crowds of importunate beggars which infest the entrance and approaches to all Turkish departments of State, through the old Turkish cemetery in the cypress wood on the hill, where stone turbans of all sorts and shapes mark the resting places of defunct pashas and even minor dignitaries ; through swarms of yelping dogs, through trains of creaking ox wagons, through narrow streets, over

pavement of the worst, all intensely interesting and picturesque, but—not to him. He saw the imposing iron-clads in the harbour, and he saw nothing else. He longed to be on board and at work, and the beauty of his surroundings rather irritated than soothed him, for Christian was nothing if not practical and had yet to learn how to possess his soul in patience.

It took us the best part of a couple of hours to get him to realize the fact that life might be still worth living, the Minister of Marine notwithstanding, and to persuade him that it would be the acme of foolishness to go near the Admiralty before the time appointed, when he had received so exceedingly broad a hint to remain away.

Fortunately it was summer time and we had no lack of amusements to offer him. What with tennis and cricket and boating parties we managed to make the week pass, as we hoped, more or less agreeably.

But it was evident to the most casual observer that Christian was not happy. Underlying all his assumed gaiety there was a sense as of duty unfulfilled, of work undone, of opportunities wasted, which weighed heavily upon his mind.

At the appointed hour in the following week Christian was at the Admiralty; and though he caught sight of Ferik Bey in the distance he was unable to catch his eye. He thought it strange that Ferik should not have noticed him, and waited on in

the hope that he would come out and at least speak to him, as he had on former occasions. But it was not to be. His experiences were precisely the same as they had been the week before, save only that by this time he had become expert in the art of rolling cigarettes, and he smoked enough of these, as he afterwards told me, to make himself sick.

That night he had an idea. He would learn Turkish. (It takes about seven years, but I did not tell him so.) That was what he would do. He would learn Turkish, fool that he was not to have thought of it before! He might just as well be turning his time, if he had to wait at the Admiralty, to some useful account. I applauded his determination to the echo. I had known other instances where men—Englishmen—had been saved from suicide or a lunatic asylum, while waiting to see a Turkish Minister, by learning his language; and Christian was such an excellent sort that I was naturally anxious to save him from either fate.

“My dear fellow,” I said, “you couldn’t possibly employ your time to greater advantage. If you put one quarter the energy into it that you do into tennis you’ll be able to greet the pasha in the vernacular. A man like you can accomplish wonders in a couple of months.”

“In a couple of months! What do you mean? Look here, I wish you wouldn’t chaff about this business—it’s getting too serious.”

"I'm not chaffing, old chap," I said soothingly, "but you really must have a little patience."

Christian raised his eyes to the billiard-room ceiling and tapped with his foot upon the floor.

"Patience! Great Scott, if I haven't had patience with these infernal procrastinating——"

I knew he was going to say something disrespectful about his superior officer and would be sorry for it afterwards, so I interrupted him.

"To-morrow, dear boy, *Ramazan* begins."

"Well, what has *Ramazan*, as you call it, got to do with the question?"

"Everything. Know, oh impetuous, hasty, excitable, vehement, precipitate, headstrong and urgent child of the Occident, that *Ramazan* is the Mohammedan month of fasting; that it begins to-night and will last for twenty-eight days; that for the coming four weeks the Turks—the Minister of Marine included—will fast by day and feast by night; that official business will be altogether at a standstill, and that your chances of seeing His Excellency in *Ramazan* are not worth five minutes purchase. *Ramazan* is succeeded by *Bairam*, a week of feasting both by day and night, during which period official business is also suspended. You are therefore sure not to see the Minister for five weeks from to-day. Then there will be the arrears represented by the accumulation of back work at the Admiralty to make up which will

certainly take a fortnight or three weeks, so that you see my calculation is really based upon sound premises, and that you may reckon on a couple of months' undisturbed devotion to Turkish."

Christian's face during my recital of what he evidently considered his personal wrongs, was a sight to behold. When I had finished he swore—not little lady-like and refined imprecations, but great big soul-stirring oaths, the special prerogatives of sea-faring men which made me cower and shrink in a corner of the billiard-room sofa and caused inexpressible pain to several fairly-seasoned of our members. But under the circumstances we all forgave him, and if I remember rightly several of us made mental notes of some of his most forcible expressions and even made use of them on subsequent occasions. Such is the force of evil example!

Poor Christian! He was well into the forty-second conjugation of compound reflective irregular verbs before he saw the Pasha. But all comes to those who know how to wait, and Christian had learnt his lesson well.

Exactly three months after his arrival, in sheer desperation he took the bull by the horns and, after receiving the diurnal assurance from Ferik Bey the *aide-de-camp*, whom by this time he hated with a deadly hatred, that His Excellency would see him *yahren moutlak* "for certain to-morrow," he forced his

way, regardless of drawn swords and bayonets, into the presence.

There he found Suleiman Pasha—a large, fat, oily and complacent personage in uniform—who looked at him and smiled blandly and ejaculated a long sentence in Turkish, not one word of which could poor Christian, despite his three months' struggle with irregular verbs, understand. It is astonishing how little irregular verbs help you in ordinary conversation for the first time in a foreign tongue!

Fortunately Christian's wits did not desert him. He remembered the Turkish for "interpreter," and he blurted it out in tones which implied there was something seriously wrong. Suleiman Pasha touched a bell and a mute instantly appeared. The Minister made a sign and in another minute the mute came in with Ferik Bey, who saluted Christian as only a Turk knows how. The latter felt that now or never was his opportunity, and immediately began to pour out his grievances. Suleiman Pasha ceremoniously waved him to a seat at his side, which he took, only to find that this was the prelude to a further edition of coffee and cigarettes. Turkish politeness, however, notwithstanding, he poured out his woes.

Would Ferik Bey oblige him by telling the Pasha that he had now been struggling and striving to see His Excellency during a period of three months, and had only that moment succeeded; that he had left

England on the definite understanding that he was to "get to work" at once; that his duties were to be pointed out to him immediately on his arrival, and now all this valuable time had been lost.

This was duly translated to the Pasha. For all reply he asked if Christian *Effendi* had anything to complain of. Had he not received his money?

Yes, but that was not all he wanted; he wanted to do his duty.

The Pasha raised his eyes to Heaven and doubtless prayed for mercy on this maniac. What *did* the *Effendi* want? He did not understand.

Poor Christian, who thought he had made his meaning sufficiently clear, began to feel desperate. He told Ferik Bey to tell the Pasha that he was not going to continue drawing his salary unless he earned it, and begged the Pasha to forthwith give him instructions as to what he should do.

The Pasha, whose politeness was simply unbounded, looked relieved. Your Turk, in whatever capacity, hates a scene almost as much as he hates pork.

Would the *Effendi* come to-morrow at this hour? By that time matters could be arranged so that he could get to work atonce. H. E. quite understood the *Effendi's* zeal, which did him infinite credit; but the matter was an important one and would require due consideration.

Christian, greatly comforted, salaamed in proper

style and withdrew. Fortunately, perhaps, he did not hear the Pasha's subsequent remarks to Ferik Bey, which were to the effect that that was just like those troublesome Englishmen. They were forever pestering him for work. On no account was he to be bothered in this matter again.

It was a case of to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, for another month, and then we saw no more of Fred Christian. He threw up the billet in disgust; sent in his resignation, which was accepted, and returned to the English service, a sadder and a wiser man.

His hair was slightly tinged with grey when he left. We were sorry to see him go for we had got to like him very much, though there were not wanting amongst our own and other communities those who entertained the opinion that he was slightly touched in the upper story. This view was subsequently strengthened by the discovery that his maternal grandmother had died of softening of the brain.



DUCK'S EGG.

WHY Sheitan-jik? I am sure I cannot tell you. You will be doubtless the more interested to know, when I inform you that the translation of the word means, approximately if not literally, "The home of the Devil." It used to be a station on a certain line of railway, as near as possible half-way between Rustchuk on the Danube and Varna on the Black Sea. It may be there now for all I know to the contrary; although, unless it is very materially improved since I knew it, it would be no great loss to anyone if it had in the interim been wiped out of existence. How it came to be called by the above euphonious and suggestive name I am at a loss to imagine; for unless the personage in question is endowed with considerably less intelligence than is usually ascribed to him, I can hardly conceive it possible that he would ever have fixed upon this particular locality for his home.

The Varna railway was in those days operated by an English company. It had been built by English capital by virtue of a concession granted by the Turkish government, and was run by Englishmen. Now-a-days they build railways on totally different lines, and I fancy on somewhat broader guage as regards the profits of the builders; but in the time whereof I write, governments were not nearly so ready to grant subsidies as they are now, nor was it an easy matter to obtain guarantees in both capital and interest. Railway companies when they wanted all the profit were, as a general rule, obliged to take at least part of the risk.

The Varna railway was on the quick route from London to Constantinople, for there was then no transcontinental line as there is now. Leaving Vienna you reached Buda-Pesth, the grand old capital of Hungary, by train, and then had the option of either taking the rail on to Bassiasch, or the steamer down the Danube, and were certain of enjoying a most delightful river trip through the magnificent scenery of the celebrated Iron Gates; with the almost equal certainty of having to get out and walk if the river happened to be a little below par, which was not unfrequently the case in summer time. This trifling drawback has lately been done away with by blowing up the rocks which impeded the passage.

Once you set foot in Rustchuk, you left civilization

behind you and entered that dreary, woe-begone, poverty-stricken country called Bulgaria, for such and nothing else it was so long as it was directly governed by the Turks. Since its emancipation by the Berlin Conference in 1878, however, it has taught Europe many a lesson in national progress and economy, and set an example which new countries on this side the Atlantic might do far worse than emulate.

At Sheitan-jik the train stopped for lunch. The station was several miles from the town ; a scattered collection of intensely ugly and dirty mud huts, deader than door nails, with nothing whatever to commend it to either visitor or tourist. The station consisted of just a shed, platform and water-tank, in the middle of an enormous plain, which bore the slightest possible traces of cultivation. "Why toil for the exclusive benefit of the taxgatherer?" said the thrifty Bulgars, and they said wisely.

I was going to the East for the first time, and carried the weight of seventeen summers with the ease and grace which characterize English school-boys. My travelling companion was an officer in the navy who was about to join his ship, a British gunboat then stationed at Constantinople. The heat, for it was summer, was intolerable, the dust stifling and, as there was nothing whatever to see in the way of scenery, we were both thankful when the monotony of

the journey was broken by our arrival at Sheitan-jik. We made the worst meal, at the most exorbitant price, which I ever remember to have eaten. Then, imbued with the curiosity of youth, I went for a little stroll round the station.

About one hundreds yards off there was a mud pond, containing water of no great superiority in appearance to that purveyed to the long-suffering population of Victoria, B.C., and in this pond there were several ducks, the only sign of animal life within sight. As I stood watching them, one old hen-duck left the water and, without assigning any reason for this gracious performance on her part, proceeded to deposit an egg literally at my feet. Thereupon she returned to her wallowing in the mire. I am at a loss to say what prompted me to the nefarious act, but quick as thought I pocketed the egg, thereby, as I trust, for the only time in my life, bringing myself within the immediate reach of the law. I make the confession with shame ; but if there be another youth of British parentage, of the same age, who would under the circumstances have done otherwise, I shall be proud to make his acquaintance. A whistle from the engine warned me that the train was about to resume its journey, and with the evidence of my crime in my coat pocket, I clambered back into the carriage which my friend and I had all to ourselves. I produced the egg with, I regret to say, the utmost glee,

and when he asked me what I was going to do with it, I had to confess that I did not know. But the Devil, who naturally was "at home" at Sheitan-jik, instantly suggested a means of turning it to practical account. My eye fell upon a man in the garb of a railway porter who was standing at the edge of the platform with a red flag in his hand, evidently making signals to the engineer.

"I am going to chuck it at that man's head," I said.

"You will never hit him," was the taunting reply.

"See if I don't," I answered ; and I leant out of the window to take a more deadly aim, he holding on to my nether limbs the while.

Ping ! pang ! the egg described a graceful trajectory and then hit the man with the flag right on the side of the cheek. For the time being the yolk which was laid upon him was greater than he could bear.

It was a dastardly and mean act on my part, I admit ; but looking backward as I do now, after a period of a quarter of a century, I can still feel a thrill of intense enjoyment course through every fibre of my being as I recall the circumstances and the man's look of ineffable disgust. Is this human or demoniacal ? I know not, but it is a fact.

The gentleman with the red flag, however, regarded the matter in quite a different light. He used

extremely strong language and there was a dangerous look in the white of his egg—I mean of his eye—but the more he swore and the angrier he looked the more immoderately I enjoyed myself.

By this time we had left the station at least one hundred yards behind when, to my horror and dismay, I found that the train, instead of increasing its speed, began to slacken. The alacrity with which my sentiments turned from gay to grave was surprising, and, to my shame be it said, hilarity was succeeded by a sense of the most abject bodily fear. My apprehensions were enormously increased by the fact that my companion, whose sense of humour at this juncture was far keener than my own, would not allow me to draw in my head, but kept me jammed up against the window in full view of the infuriated egg-bespattered porter, who was running for dear life to catch up with the train, evidently thirsting for my blood. To my intense relief, however, the train did not stop, but gradually drew out of the station, and the last I saw of my victim he was shaking his fist in my face, though too much out of breath to continue to swear. The incident remained a good jest, if not forever, at least during the remainder of our journey.

* * * * *

Ten years afterwards, almost to a day—at any rate in the same month, I will not be positive as to the date—I found myself in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where I had been staying for a few days with a friend. I was going up to London by the Scotch express, which was due at 11:20 p.m., and as a matter of course she was late. My friend, who had driven me down to the station, had left me on the platform, as it was a bad night and he was anxious to get home. There were very few people about, possibly owing to the fact that it was Saturday, and I wandered up and down, with my travelling-bag in my hand. A respectable-looking man in the brown corduroy of a porter came up and asked civilly if he could take charge of my bag, whereupon I confided it to his keeping. I asked him if he thought the train would be much over-due, and he said he thought she would be in in about ten minutes. Then to my intense astonishment he said :—

“I think, sir, I’ve come across you before now,” with a strong emphasis on the *before*.

I replied that I thought it was hardly likely, seeing that this was my first visit to Newcastle, and that I resided out of England.

“That may be, sir,” he said ; “but it was not in England that I met you. Was you ever in Bulgaria ?”

I said that I had been in Bulgaria many times, and began to wonder where on earth this man had seen me.

"I have been in Bulgaria too," he said, "but it was a long time ago. Do you remember Sheitan-jik?"

I said I remembered Sheitan-jik perfectly; still without any glimmer of reminiscence.

"I used to be a porter on the Varna railway," he said; "do not you remember me now?"

But I was still hopelessly in the dark.

"Don't you remember chucking a duck's egg at a man on the platform at Sheitan-jik ten years ago?" but long before he had finished his sentence I remembered all too vividly the scene I have recounted above; and yet again, to my shame be it said, a feeling very similar to that which had come over me when the train slackened speed began to make itself felt.

I said "Good gracious me, you don't mean to say that you are the man?"

"Yes, sir, I do," he replied. "It's a long time ago, and you will excuse my saying so, but it was a precious lucky thing for you that I did not lay hold of you that day."

I admitted that it was and offered a silent prayer that this man might live up to the Christian standard of forgiveness.

I asked him how it was that he had remembered my face and was able to recognize me after so long a time, and he answered:—

"When you was leaning out of the carriage window a-takin' aim I got a good look at you. You haven't

changed anything to speak of, not having grown no beard; but Lord love you, if you 'ad it wouldn't a made any difference, for I vowed that I'd never forget the young gent as threw that duck's egg at me."

I was always of a hospitable nature, and I said, "Come, and have a drink?"

But just then the welcome rumble of the incoming train made itself heard, so I gave him, in defiance of the company's by-laws, the price of many dozen duck's eggs, in consideration of which he let bygones be bygones, and further, found me a carriage all to myself.

Thus it was that the duck's egg represented a distinct score after all.



“OLMAZ.”

FEW people know, and in all probability very few people ever will know the terrible amount of suffering that was engendered by the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. After the passage of the Balkans by the Russians in January of the latter year, the entire Turkish population of Bulgaria, scared out of their lives by the reports of what had been done in other places by the victorious Russians (reports not a tithe of them true) and fearing lest a worse thing should befall them, came pouring in upon the capital at the rate of twenty, and on several occasions sixty thousand a day. The trains belonging to the Roumelian Railway Company were simply besieged by the refugees; old men and children, young men and maidens of every class and description, carrying such scanty articles of clothing and household goods as they could lay hands on in their flight, gathered from all sides and directions upon the line of railway, in such wise

that they literally blocked the way of the trains. They swarmed upon it like locusts, filling the cars to suffocation, climbing on the roofs of the carriages, hanging on to the steps, getting into the luggage crates and cattle pens—anywhere to escape from the advancing foe.

The whole thing was a scare, and nothing but a scare; a political movement designed and carried out with the object of forcing the Mahommedans to vacate Bulgaria. Stories of atrocities which had never had any existence—very much on the lines of subsequent Armenian troubles in Asia Minor—had been disseminated wholesale by Russian emissaries, and the tales lost nothing in the telling.

The consequence was that the entire Mussulman population, in the majority of cases, lost their heads and fled for their lives, leaving everything behind them save what they could carry in their hands. In some few instances, before the scare had become most intense, they had been able to take things more quietly and had driven their flocks and herds on foot before them into Constantinople, a distance varying between 100 and 200 miles. Thus it came about that a horse could be bought for 200 piastres *caimé*, paper money, value in sterling about seven shillings, and a donkey for half that amount. Oxen ranged about eight and ten shillings apiece; and copper cooking utensils, with which the Turk is always liberally

supplied, for he cooks in nothing else, sold by weight for about a penny a pound.

Absolutely no provision was made by the Turkish government for the reception of the refugees ; and, but for European benevolence, it is probable that the unfortunate wretches would literally have starved to death. But England and Englishmen came nobly to the fore, as they are in the habit of doing on these occasions. The Turkish Relief Fund, an organization founded by Lady Burdett-Coutts and administered by Mr. Ashmead Bartlett, now her husband, and Sir Francis (then Major) De Winton lost no time in grappling with the question. They speedily formed a corps of volunteers amongst the younger members of the European colonies in Constantinople to take the work in hand.

The Turkish government, after much negotiation and trouble, agreed to give the use of certain large *khans* in Stamboul for the reception of the refugees immediately upon their arrival. Subsequently, owing to pressure on space, to use a journalistic term, they allowed the refugees to occupy several of the mosques, St. Sophia amongst the number.

The Roumelian Railway Company, to prevent their trains from falling into the hands of the Russians, as soon as the passage of the Balkans had been forced, ordered them all back upon Constantinople. The consequence was that in a very short time the

main track and the sidings were full of cars ; and, there being nowhere to put the incoming trains as they arrived, the terminus daily became further and further away from the capital.

As bad luck would have it, the winter was the most severe that had been known for many years. The elements are the greatest time-servers in history ; they always side with the stronger party. Snow lay thick upon the ground, and the cold, although there were not many degrees of frost, was intense owing to the prevalence of wind. The refugees arrived, as a rule, about seven or eight o'clock in the evening ; and the duty of the Volunteer Brigade, of which I was one, consisted in going down to the station, or as near it as might be practicable, to meet the train, receiving the refugees and drafting them off into the various refuge houses prepared for their reception.

In they came, a crowd of famished, half-frozen, shivering wretches of all sorts and conditions, many of them clad only in cotton clothes, though the lightly-clad, curiously enough, were not the ones who appeared to suffer most from the cold. Often we found it a hard task to distinguish between the living and the dead. Many of the bodies in the luggage vans and cattle pens were frozen stiff to the bars and we had the greatest difficulty in getting them out. Many, too, were quite unable to walk from the place where the train had to stop into the town, and died

by the way from exhaustion. Fires had been lighted along the track, and it was a heart-breaking sight to see the half-frozen women and children cowering over the blaze.

The men were marshalled off into one wing of the buildings, the women and children into another, and they all obeyed the orders given them with a docility which was marvelous to behold. The provisions made for them on arrival in the *khans* consisted of hot broth and bread. The soup was brought in in a huge iron caldron, slung on a pole and carried by two men. I used to wonder of what stuff these people were made, who, literally famished as they were, would obey orders like little children and squat quietly on their heels when told to do so, waiting patiently until their turn came to be fed. However, the thing had to be done in order, or not at all.

The soup was ladled out to them in basins, and to each was given a quarter of a loaf of bread. The rooms, which were huge in size, often contained as many as two or three hundred people, and a European, a member of the Volunteer Brigade, was placed in charge of one of these rooms, with several of his colleagues to assist him. I happened to be in command of one section.

So long as the refugees were Turks we knew we would have no trouble with them. The men, such as had any, would quietly give up their arms when

requested to do so. They asked no questions, but resigned themselves, with true Mussulman resignation, to their fate. It was *kismet* (fate) and there was an end of the matter. They waited patiently till their food was given them, though the glare of hunger in their eyes was pitiable to see. Sometimes they had to wait a long time, but they seemed to have complete confidence in the Europeans, and although they never expressed their thanks verbally, it was perfectly evident that they were “truly thankful for what they were about to receive.” My ward contained women and children. As soon as we saw that all had been fed we were at liberty to go, reaching our homes sometimes as late as two and three in the morning.

What became of the refugees the next day I do not know. I do not believe that anybody else does. They were told to “move on” by the authorities, and we saw them no more, their places being filled by fresh arrivals on the next trains.

Naturally we used to exchange experiences, and some of my colleagues in other *khans* had had a very bad time with the Circassians, who were as difficult to deal with as the Turks were easy. Fortunately there were not many of these, but when they did come they made things remarkably lively. One night, when my *khan* was about three-quarters full, word was passed along that the *Tcherkessli* were coming, and to my regret I saw that the incoming contingent belonged to

the dreaded race. However, there was no help for it, and I had consequently to assume an air of authority and assurance I was far from feeling. Fortunately no men came into my apartment, which, as I have said, was devoted to women and children, but they were on the same landing and uncomfortably near.

When I was about two-thirds through the feeding process, a tall Circassian suddenly entered the room. He was a fine fellow, like all his race, dressed in the handsome Circassian costume which is richly ornamented with silver. That he was armed from top to toe goes without saying. At arm's length he was holding by the leg a tiny baby girl about six months old, with nothing on save a piece of narrow blue ribbon about her neck to protect her from the "Evil Eye," extremely scanty apparel, seeing the severity of the weather. In his other hand the Circassian had a large open knife.

He called out in Turkish :—"Is there anyone here who claims this child? It does not belong to our women."

But nobody seemed anxious to acknowledge ownership.

"Well," he said, "I can carry it about no longer. I may just as well put it out of its misery."

I sprang forward and seized the child.

"It is mine," I said, an assertion which I trust my readers will not believe. He looked at me for a

moment in some astonishment, but he gave up the child without demur, and to my intense relief he left the room.

It was an exceedingly embarrassing position for a modest and retiring bachelor of some five and twenty summers, but what could I do? I took the poor little thing in my arms and tried to feed it out of a huge iron spoon with which the soup was poured into the basins of the refugees, for I had nothing else; and it scalded its poor little hands in its frantic eagerness to get at the food.

The women in the room, of whom there must have been at least a hundred present, were either too occupied with their own needs or their children's to notice my predicament. At any rate they gave no sign. I asked several of them if they would take it and look after it, but none of them seemed to relish the proposition. I had another room to visit and began to find it was extremely awkward to assume a tone and attitude befitting an officer (albeit of volunteers) with a naked female infant in my arms.

At this juncture, fortunately for me, my chum with whom I lived—a fellow-clerk in the bank, by name Harley Chomes—came in to make some enquiry. He was always easily moved to laughter at my expense, and he no sooner caught sight of me and my innocent charge than he began to smile. I explained matters and then said, “Harley, my boy, you have got to help me

out of this. Not one of these women seem inclined to take this poor little kid."

He said, "Good Lord, man, what on earth do you expect me to do with it?"

Now, we both had a friend who was charity personified and who, I knew perfectly well, would be only too delighted to welcome the infant.

I said, "I can't get away from here, as you know, but you can. Take the kid, wrap it up in your coat and run for dear life to Mrs. Stanley's (about four miles off). She will take it in, and if she cannot, we can always have it sent to the Catholic Foundling Hospital."

Harley was wearing a large ulster coat, and almost before he knew where he was I had unbuttoned it and placed the baby in his arms. I do not think he quite liked it, in fact I'm sure he didn't, but my manner was exceedingly impressive.

To my great astonishment the child never cried, and when once its hunger had been appeased had begun to crow and laugh as a six-months' baby will.

Harley moved towards the door, but he was destined to get no further. We were both suddenly surrounded by infuriated women.

"The *Giaours* (the faithless) are stealing a Mussulman child," was the cry. "*Olmaz. Eyip dir.*" (It is a disgrace and must not be.)

Fifty arms were held out for the child. "Give it

me, give it me,” from all directions ; “ I will take care of it.”

I hastened to assure the incensed ladies that neither my friend nor I had any intention of stealing the child. We were animated solely by a desire of saving its life, and were only too willing to hand it over to them on the one condition that they would promise to take care of it. This they readily agreed to do, and it was with a certain sense of relief that I made the child over to a fat, unwieldy and entirely shapeless old woman, whose face, wrinkled as it was, bore nevertheless a kind expression. Harley and I went about our work in different parts of the *khan*, and we saw no more that night of the baby.

Next day in the afternoon I came down early, as I was in the habit of doing, in order to make sure that the rooms in the *khan* had been cleaned and made ready for the next batch of refugees, a by no means unnecessary proceeding.

In a corner of the passage, next to the room which had been occupied by the women the night before, I saw what looked like a piece of coloured rag. On going to see what it was, I found it covered the dead body of the child. How it came by its death I never knew.



HERKULES.

ITS full name is Herkules-bad, but to save time, it is generally called Herkules. Although dignified by the name of a town, it is of positively microscopic dimensions, and nestles snug and comfortable in the loveliest valley amongst the Carpathian mountains in Hungary.

Would that civic duties in Western cities were as ably performed as they are in Herkules. It is run entirely by the government, which is tantamount to being under military rule. Its most insignificant official is bedecked and bedizened in the most gorgeous of uniforms, and any spare time its inhabitants may have on hand during the tourist season is mostly occupied in saluting. It is situated some fifteen miles from Turn-Severin on the Danube, and the drive between the two places, like Cleopatra, simply begs description. Provided always that you comply with the official regulations, you are as free as the air in Herkules ; but you should take no liberty with the law for you are certain to regret it.

Mineral springs abound of all kinds and descriptions, sulphur, iron and arsenic predominating, and to describe it briefly, it is one of the most beautiful, fashionable and salubrious health resorts in Eastern Europe. The town itself consists principally of one long arcade in the form of a semi-circle, at either end of which is a hotel of stupendous and imposing proportions. In the centre is the *Kursaal*, or public concert room, and in front of this are the public gardens, laid out with the greatest possible taste and elegance. There is a street, one street, of perhaps a hundred yards in length, in which are still to be found relics of the old town, for in the old Roman days the waters of Herkules were just as famous as they are now, and wonderful cures were wrought upon the august persons of Emperors, as Latin inscriptions amply testify. On either side the mountains tower up to a height of many thousand feet, sheer, precipitous, snow-capped and pine-clad. The walks and drives through the forests are dreams of beauty and of perfect bliss. Just the place in fact to spend a honeymoon. I spent mine there, so I ought to know.

The snow will not lie on the ground in Herkules, by reason, it is said, of the great warmth of the soil ; owing, doubtless, to the heat engendered by the innumerable springs, which are of all degrees of temperature and varieties of taste—mostly nasty, as in the case of the sulphur, which is abominable.

This stricture, however, does not apply to the drinking water, which is positively delicious, clear, cold, sparkling as crystal, and invigorating as champagne.

The waters of Herkules are famous all over Eastern Europe. The public fountains, during my stay, were always crowded with devotees of all classes and nationalities, and from the extraordinary enthusiasm with which they proclaimed the excellence of the brand, I am inclined to believe that some of them at least must have hailed from Victoria, British Columbia. They had evidently never tasted anything to equal it before.

The watering season is of short duration, lasting only about four months; and inasmuch as the capacity of the town is strictly limited and there is always an enormous demand for rooms in the hotels, these have to be secured some considerable time in advance; unless, of course, you are willing to take chances in the matter of accommodation, which in the early stages of matrimony you are naturally anxious to avoid. I had accordingly taken my measures in advance, and had secured apartments in the larger of the two hotels.

On our arrival (note the plural pronoun and all it implies) by carriage from Turn-Severin, we were conducted to the *Kaiser-Hof*, and there interviewed by an imposing official, who put us through the most searching cross-examination as to our identity and antece-

dents, and elicited from my bride, who spoke German with greater fluency than I did, the information that we had entered the holy estate of matrimony some forty-eight hours before. This was a dead give-away, for, after the manner of newly married men, I had been striving to simulate the outward and visible signs of an old and a seasoned hand. There was no help for it, however, and it all went down in a ponderous register. I felt as if it were judgment day.

My informant then asked "what I was," and I replied with pardonable pride "that I was a banker."

As soon as the official had noted the interesting fact that my calling was a financial one, he asked me, "What class?"

I did not understand, and begged for elucidation. Then he said, with the exquisite politeness which characterizes Hungarian officials :—

"There are five classes of bankers, as there are of all other professions and callings. Is the *Herr* a first or a fifth-class banker?"

I indignantly asserted that I was a banker of the first class, and to the extent which my knowledge of German permitted, wanted to know if there was anything in my appearance to indicate the contrary. But the official merely smiled and noted the fact in his register. He then gave us an order admitting us to the freedom of the city, and entitling us to the use of our apartments in the hotel, which opened on to the pub-

lic garden and were all that could possibly be desired.

One of the chief characteristics of Herkules, as of all Hungarian towns, indeed, is its music. A string band of the very first excellence played three times a day in the gardens—namely, from eight till nine, from twelve till one, from four till five, and from eight till eleven at night in the *Kursaal*. More exquisite music I never heard.

Hungarians are born musicians, and in our walks and drives in the surrounding country we had every opportunity of determining this fact beyond question, for each of the villages has its own orchestra, consisting generally of a stringed quartette. The leader would start off and improvise some theme, always of a wild, weird nature, which is very peculiar in style and not particularly taking at first to the untrained, but not the less fascinating on that account.

In a minute or two the others would fall into their parts, constantly reverting to the original theme, and would thus play on for hours, quite wrapped up and lost in their own music. Yet these men were as often as not ordinary labourers or farm hands, dressed invariably in white cotton garb with lambskin *kalpa*, and although always of fine physique, of none too savoury attributes.

We literally revelled in the music. Each evening there would be a concert in the *Kursaal*, which lasted

a couple of hours ; after which dancing would be vigorously kept up until eleven, when the *Kursaal* closed ; and by half-past every light in the little town was out, "by order of the Emperor-King."

We derived a good deal of amusement from the interrogation to which we were subjected on arrival, and founded many theories as to the reason for the searching cross-examination to which all visitors were put.

It was the height of the season, and there were many celebrities in Herkules. At the next table to us, under the verandah adjoining the hotel where we took our meals, was an Estherhazy ; further off was one of the Vienna Rothschilds with his wife and children, and at a third table sat Count Czecheny, a Hungarian magnate known throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom ; not to mention other notables of minor degree. We were consequently in very swell company, and began to feel ourselves most important personages.

All doubts as to the meaning of our interview with the Governor of the town were set at rest on the eighth day after our arrival ; when about eight o'clock in the morning (we rose early in Herkules), the door of our sitting-room opened, and an officer saluted on the threshold. He presented a little bill. It was made out in my name, and was followed by my description as a banker of the first class. It was drawn up as follows :—

To contribution to the town water-works.....	10 florins
To subscription to the town band.....	10 „
To subscription to the public baths.....	10 „
To subscription to the public streets (there was only one).....	10 „
To subscription to the police force	10 „
To subscription to the public lighting.....	10 „
<hr/>	
Total (payable cash)	60 florins

Being at a loss to understand the nature of this demand, as I had paid my hotel bill, of a none too modest amount, the night before, I begged for explanation, and was courteously informed that I could have all the explanations I wanted after I had paid the bill. My uniformed friend practically amounted to a bailiff in possession, and I had no recourse but to part with the amount "spot cash." He receipted the account with an Imperial - Royal flourish, and left me feeling particularly sore over the transaction ; though I was still entirely in the dark as to the reason of the enormity, as it seemed to me, of the charges.

Immediately after breakfast I sallied forth to consult my friend the doctor, to whom I had had letters of introduction, and under whose superintendence I had taken a course of sulphur baths.

When I showed him the account he looked at it in amazement and then looked at me ; after which performance he went off into an immoderate fit of laughter. Personally, though not altogether lacking

in a sense of humour, I could see nothing whatever to be amused at.

"For goodness' sake, doctor, explain what this thing means. If it is a joke, I think it has been carried quite far enough ; and if it is serious, I consider it an abominable swindle."

Whereat he only laughed the more.

When he had recovered sufficiently from his hilarity to come down to facts, he told me that in his long course of fifteen years' experience I was the only first-class banker who had ever visited Herkules.

"But," I said indignantly, "what are you talking about ? One of the Rothschilds was sitting at the very next table to me. What kind of a banker is he, I should like to know ?"

"Fifth-class, my dear sir," said the doctor, rubbing his hands. "That is all he is, when he comes to Herkules. It is merely a matter of registration, but it makes a wonderful difference in the bills."

"And what does a fifth-class banker pay," I asked indignantly, "for these infernal charges ?"

"Exactly one-fifth of what a first-class banker pays. Had you registered under the fifth category, you would have paid twelve instead of sixty florins."

I felt very angry and expressed myself in no measured terms.

"But it is entirely your own fault," he said. "Why did you call yourself a first-class banker, if you are

not one? And if you are a first-class banker why should you object to pay the charges?"

"But," I said, "why do they take Rothschild as a fifth-class banker? They must know better than that."

"Not at all," replied the doctor. "Each person who comes to Herkules has the privilege of rating himself and paying accordingly. Next time you come I presume that you will do as he does, and write yourself down fifth-class."

I felt very much inclined to quote Dogberry and say, "Oh, that I had been writ down an ass," but I did not say so to the doctor.

My sixty florin contribution to the municipal fund franked me through for another month, but at any rate I was determined not to be caught again, and on the morning of my departure I again visited the doctor and asked him to let me know how much I was indebted to him for his professional services.

"Anything you like, my dear sir," he said, with a magnanimous wave of his hand. "I never make any charge. My patients always pay me whatever they please, and I am always truly thankful."

This was very unsatisfactory to me. I had no means of knowing what the scale of professional charges was in Herkules, and told him so, begging him again to mention a sum. But he was obdurate.

In a large china bowl on his desk there were many

florin notes, some of five florins, some of ten, some of fifty, one or two of a hundred.

"My patients always put their contributions in that bowl," he said, running several of the notes through his fingers and flaunting them before my eyes with a lordly air.

"At any rate," I said, "I hope you will not expect me to pay you on the basis of a first-class banker."

"Oh, no," he answered, smilingly, "I am quite willing to put you in the fifth-class category."

I took rapid counsel with my bride and we figured out that if I gave him fifty florins he would be well paid, for I had really caused him very little trouble, and his advice had been rather of a friendly than a professional nature. The doctor looked out of the window, while I slipped a note of fifty florins into his china bowl. He then bade me an affectionate *adieu*, and I went back to the hotel to settle with my host.

I admitted all the items in his account but the last one. He had charged me ten florins for a broken ewer, which I strenuously objected to pay. This again was evidently a charge made to a first-class banker. I was having a violent altercation with the hotel-keeper on the subject when in came the doctor.

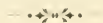
"Good heavens," I thought to myself, "I have not paid this fellow enough. If I get out of this place in the clothes I stand in I shall be lucky."

But I was wrong. I had evidently very consider-

ably over-paid the doctor, for I have never, in the course of a varied experience, met with anyone more obsequious or more polite. When I had explained my difficulty he said it was simply monstrous that young and newly married couples should be swindled in this fashion ; that the honour of Herkules as a fashionable watering place was at stake, and that unless the charge was immediately reduced from ten florins to one the hotel-keeper would hear of the matter again when licensing day came round in a manner he would little appreciate. The doctor's indignation was beautiful to behold ; it moreover produced the desired effect, and we both came to the conclusion that he was a charming man. Our fifty florins invested in the china bowl had saved us nine florins in broken earthenware — a magnificent investment. We afterwards had reason to believe that the fee we had given the doctor was in reality far in advance of even first-class banking charges, and beat the record in his professional receipts for similar services rendered by about seventy-five per cent. I have also a lingering suspicion that the florin notes in the china bowl partook largely of the nature of decoy ducks or ground bait, but whether or no, they certainly served a purpose.

The above notwithstanding, those were halcyon days.

“ How cruelly sweet are the echoes that start
When memory plays an old tune on the heart.”



STRICTLY ENTAILED.

THERE is no difficulty in getting servants in Eastern Europe, but there is frequently great difficulty in getting rid of them. The supply, as elsewhere, is in excess of the demand, and there are always plenty of servants to be had of all colours, creeds and nationalities, at rates, moreover, which, compared with the modest "living wage" ruling the Pacific Coast, sink into positive insignificance. This is undoubtedly a blessing, but—there is a "but" in every case—it may be questioned whether it is altogether unmixed or whether there is any need to be unfeignedly thankful when one takes into consideration the price one is occasionally called upon to pay for it.

It is wisdom before entering into the bonds of domestic servitude for the *quasi* lord and master to make enquiries as to the nationality of his future humble and obedient servant. If you hit upon a Montenegrin, for instance, it may happen that—like

your creditors—he will never leave you and may prove a veritable C. P. R., or rather a P. R. C., which is but a playful way of expressing a Positively Reckless Character, and to all intents and purposes, from a Canadian point of view, amounts to very much the same thing.

The Montenegrins—natives of the “Black Mountain,” on the eastern shores of the Adriatic, whose national and proud boast is that they have never been conquered, and what is more, never will be (a claim, be it remarked, which is not altogether substantiated by history, but that makes no difference)—are a magnificent race, physically speaking, *bien entendu*; morally, as the immortal Bottom once remarked, I imagine that they are “as other men.” They are staunch adherents of the orthodox Greek Church and marvellously devout in their religious observances, but I never found, from personal experience, that they made any the worse liars on that account. Indeed, the extremes of mendacity and sanctimony frequently meet in the same individual, though far be it from me to assert that the Montenegrins enjoy a monopoly of the combination. On the other hand, they have good gifts. They are courageous beyond belief, having no fear of death, and expect other people to have as little regard for life as they have themselves, which undeniably gives them an advantage. They are strictly honest from their own point of view, and

there is no instance on record of a Montenegrin ever having allowed anybody (else) to rob his employer. They are, moreover, "faithful unto death," though whether their own or other people's is a matter of perfect indifference to them. One of their main disadvantages, however, lies in the fact that the law of entail as regards retention of a post, however modest, in your family is strictly enforced. The place of a groom or cook, or whatever it may be, descends from father to son; or, failing male issue, to the nearest of kin. This arrangement is sometimes fraught with disagreeable consequences, as the sequel will show. They don't go in for "trades unions" or "protection" or anything half so complicated in Montenegro. They settle differences between capital and labour in a far more expeditious manner.

There are several important lines of steamers plying to the Bosphorus, both from English and Mediterranean ports, and not the least among them is that of the Austrian Lloyds, which owns a magnificent fleet of some twenty or thirty vessels, all of large tonnage and generally up to date. The agency in Constantinople is an important one, for the salary and position are not to be despised.

The door-keeper, or *odabashi*, as he is called, is a personage of some distinction in all administrations in the East, whether Mussulman or Christian. He gives—if only by reason of his personal magnificence and

costume—an air of respectability to the establishment which it might not otherwise possess, and serves to impress strangers, at any rate, with a sense of his own and his employer's importance. Usually a large and imposing person is selected to fill this billet, and, when he is a Montenegrin, he invariably wears a splendid dress, consisting of baggy trousers of white cloth, white jacket and red waistcoat embroidered all over with gold; a huge embossed leather waist-belt or band, stuffed full of pistols, knives and other deadly weapons; while upon his head he wears a cap which I must e'en describe as of the shape known as "pork-pie," whereof the crown is red, half only being embroidered with gold, and turned up in black to an inch from the circumference. These colours have significance. The red represents the blood that has been shed, the gold embroidery the glory that has been won in Montenegrin wars, while the black border signifies the national mourning for the slain.

Nicolas Nicolaievitch was the Austrian Lloyds' agent at the time of which I write, and had occupied this position for many years. He was loved and respected by all who knew him, and when, in the fullness of time, he retired from the position, everybody was very sorry to lose him. He was succeeded by a very much younger man, who had received his education in Europe, and had less reverence for the ways and customs of the East than possibly, in

his own interest, he should have had.

Old Elia, the doorkeeper, had occasion, very shortly after the arrival of the new agent, to ask for leave of absence to go to his country. He had been at his post every day for something like sixteen years, and although he had never done a stroke of work the whole time, that was not his fault; he was not paid to work, he was paid to look grand and imposing, and these onerous duties he ably fulfilled.

Mr. Serkovitch, the new agent, readily granted his request; and then old Elia said: "My nephew Milo will take my place."

"All right," said Mr. Serkovitch, "you need not trouble yourself about your successor; that is my affair and I will attend to it."

But Elia persisted in his demand that his nephew should be duly installed prior to his departure, and explained that such was the custom of his fellow-countrymen, as Mr. Serkovitch could easily determine.

Mr. Serkovitch gave him to understand and put it in plain language, that this was no business of his; and the old man, finding that remonstrance and expostulation were unavailing, finally withdrew.

Mr. Serkovitch desired to put another man in the door-keeper's place. He had heard of this custom among the Montenegrins, but he was not a man who liked to be dictated to, nor was he disposed to carry out anybody's ideas but his own. The next day

accordingly, his own man was duly installed in the position of door-keeper.

An hour or two afterwards, Mr. Serkovitch was informed that a Montenegrin wished to see him, and a tall handsome young fellow of about twenty-five entered the room. He salaamed respectfully, and announced that he was Milo, old Elia's nephew, and had come to occupy the place of door-keeper.

Mr. Serkovitch was polite, but firm. He gave Mr. Milo to understand that the place was already occupied, and that he had no need of his services.

"But," said Milo, "the place is mine by right. My uncle Elia has no children; I am his next of kin, and I succeed by inheritance to the post that he has vacated."

Mr. Serkovitch smiled at the child-like simplicity of the man.

"That may be all right from your point of view," he said, "but not from mine. I do not know you; I owe you nothing, and have already made other arrangements. I wish you a very good morning."

But Milo showed no disposition to move.

"The *Chelibi* does not seem to understand that I am only asking for my rights. The place is mine, and I demand that I be immediately installed."

Mr. Serkovitch began to wax wrathful. He was not accustomed to be bearded in his den in this manner, and the matter was rapidly passing beyond a joke.

"See here, my man," he said, "we had better understand each other at once. I do not propose to be dictated to by you or anybody else. You have my answer, and, if you do not clear out immediately, I will have you removed by force."

Milo's eyes blazed, but he merely saluted and withdrew.

Serkovitch told the story at the club afterwards, as a good joke ; and those of us who had been but a short time in the country entirely sympathized with the view he had taken of the matter. We liked Mr. Milo's "cheek," as we called it. But grayer heads than ours regarded it in a different and a graver light. They told Serkovitch that he was a very foolish fellow to try and run counter to established habits and customs, and that Milo might make things exceedingly uncomfortable for him.

But he was a young man, and his knowledge was naturally in inverse ratio to his youth. He wanted to know what Mr. Milo could do.

"He could put a bullet into you," coolly suggested the Russian consul, through his cigarette smoke. He had had some experience with Montenegrins and their ways.

"Oh, nonsense, my dear sir," said Serkovitch, "you are not going to frighten me with any stories of that kind."

"I do not say he will," replied the consul, "but you

asked me what he could do, and I merely outlined possibilities."

And then we went and played billiards.

That afternoon, as Serkovitch was going into his office, which was situated on the water-front, one of the most crowded thoroughfares of the town, he suddenly found his passage barred by Milo, who stood straight as a dart in front of him.

"I have come once more," he said, very respectfully but firmly, "to tell the *Chelibi* that my uncle Elia's place is mine by right, and to ask him if he has reconsidered his decision of this morning."

Serkovitch told him to go to the devil, which, under the circumstances, was a shortsighted and inconsiderate order to give.

"Will the *Chelibi*," said Milo, with much the same look in his eyes as had spoilt the good-natured expression of his face in the morning, "take advice on the subject? I do not think that he really wishes to do me wrong."

But, for all answer, Serkovitch reiterated his mandate, brushed roughly past and went into his office, giving orders, as he went, that, under no circumstances was Milo to be re-admitted on the premises.

The next morning, on his way through the street, he met Milo again.

"Has the *Chelibi* taken advice?" he asked; where-

upon Serkovitch, whose language was none of the choicest, swore at him lustily and told him that if he alluded to the subject again he would inform his consul and have him put under lock and key as a nuisance.

"The *Chelibi* will remember," said Milo quite calmly, "that this is the third time I have asked him to give me my rights. Does he still refuse?——" but Serkovitch, whose vocabulary by this time was exhausted, vouchsafed him no reply, and slammed the door in his face.

We saw him that night at the club, and he told us the story, probably with embellishments ; and again the old Russian consul warned him to be careful and said he did not like the look of things.

But Serkovitch, who knew not the meaning of fear, only laughed.

The next morning, in the same place, he met Milo, who did not salute him.

"Get out of my way," said Serkovitch with an oath.

They were the last words he spoke, for, the next instant, he fell dead at the Montenegrin's feet, with a bullet through his heart from Milo's revolver fired at arm's length. The sound of the report brought fifty people to the spot. They picked up the dead man and carried him into his office ; and, though it is probable that the occurrence must have been actually witnessed,

for the street was certainly crowded at the time, nobody laid hands on Milo. He quietly slipped unobserved into one of the innumerable side streets which lead goodness knows where and to my knowledge was never heard of again. He was certainly never brought to justice.



AN ARMENIAN ATROCITY.

WEBSTER would have immortalized him had he but enjoyed the privilege of his acquaintance. He would certainly have figured in the Unabridged amongst the concentrated essences or patent extracts of virtue. I cannot tell you what was his age ; I don't think he had any to speak of, but I imagine it must have been somewhere between forty and fifty. You never had a chance to think how old he was, for all your time was taken up in admiring contemplation of his many and manifold qualities. I do not know if he was bald-headed, but judging by the way he "went for" his own duties and those of us who scamped ours I think he must have been. Then, again, he always wore a *fez*, which article of head-gear be it borne in mind sticketh closer than a brother and is never removed in official or polite society. It is as disrespectful to enter a lady's or your superior's presence with your *fez* off in the East as it would be in the

West to keep your hat on under similar circumstances.

The first thing an Oriental makes for in the dead of night when aroused by alarm of fire is his *fez*. We all know what the Westerner makes for. That is one of the striking points of difference between them.

Meguerditch Meguerditchian was his name, and Armenia was his nation. He had been in the bank—always in the cash department—from time immemorial, and it would not in the least surprise me to learn that he had been born there. There were other cashiers, but they did not count. Meguerditch bossed the whole show. He never took a holiday, was never ill, and never once during the whole period of his long and constant attention to duty had he been known to apply for leave to attend an aunt's or a grandmother's funeral; wherein he probably broke the record in the history of bank clerks. Meguerditch knew all the bank's business, mostly by intuition, it would appear. Whenever anything was wanted, having reference to bygone ages (long before Confederation) no one ever thought of consulting the archives, but went straight to Meguerditch, who simply turned up the files of his memory, and there was the matter you wanted, neatly docketed, endorsed and ready for use. A wonderful man was Meguerditch Meguerditchian. We had many holidays in those days and *fêted* most of the saints in the calendar, orthodox and unorthodox, by closing the bank; but

Meguerditch's soul soared into higher flights. He was simply consumed by a sense of duty. He lived on the four rules of arithmetic with a marked *penchant* in favour of subtraction, and was altogether impervious to the temptation of grosser appetites. No one for a moment imagined, even in the spring, that this young man's fancy lightly turned to thoughts of love. He was always at his desk balancing and counter-balancing ledgers and cash-books, making out statements and statistical calculations to prove how infinitely superior was the bank's position to that of every other establishment in the world.

So wonderfully economical too. His only vices consisted in cigarette-smoking and coffee-drinking, the latter at the expense of the bank. Each clerk was allowed unlimited coffee, it being an unwritten law in the East that no work could possibly be done without it; and a whole army of *cafégis*, as they are called, were employed from daylight to dark in concocting the aromatic beverage for the special benefit and sustenance of the bank clerks.

The bank was very proud of Meguerditch, and he was always held up as an example to the younger members of his profession in all its branches, as the one incomparable, infallible and utterly unattainable standard of excellence.

The bank was also proud of its reserve, which amounted to no less than two hundred thousand

pounds in gold coin of the realm. This was a little nest-egg which we fostered with devoted care, constantly adding thereto and but rarely deducting therefrom, knowing of experience that, when we did want it, we should want it badly and at once.

The pride of Meguerditch's life was this gold reserve; and when he made out his cash statements he always used to put in the amount figuring to the debit of "Rest" in large, fat, highly-impressive figures in red ink, with a marvellous caligraphic flourish underneath, which it would have taken anybody else months to manufacture. He would talk about the reserve, too, at the clerks' luncheon table, and compare it, with ostentatious pride, with that pertaining to other establishments. He gauged banks largely by the amount they held in reserve, no doubt an excellent test of merit, and was never tired of demonstrating the importance of holding as large a percentage as possible of your liabilities in actual and tangible cash.

The reserve was kept in the bowels of the earth, whereunto one descended by steep steps of masonry, lighted, as I remember, by a solitary candle; and it was not until you were really inside the vaults and had grown accustomed to the dim religious light that you fully realized you were in the presence of enough to retire upon.

It was Meguerditch's duty to take the gold down to

the reserve vaults himself, though always in the presence of the directors. He never would allow anybody else to have the handling of it. He was, as he said, responsible, and he lived fully up to his responsibility. The jingling of the cash keys was as music in his ears, and in good sooth he played a merry tune upon them, whereunto other people danced.

The bank itself in those days was a huge rambling building of stone and brick, which had been erected many centuries before by the Genoese. The walls in places were ten feet thick and constructed with a view to withstand the most determined assaults from without, but not, as shall presently appear, the more insidious nature of internal attack. At the end of the cash-room itself was a small room, and inside the room was a large safe, wherein was kept the money for daily requirements. When, therefore, the day's work was over it was Meguerditch's pleasing duty to convey the sacks, each containing a thousand pounds (worth eighteen shillings and two pence, every one of them) from the cash department to this safe. Every now and again a certain proportion of them was destined to be consigned to the lower regions as and when it was found convenient to add to the reserve. The manager, when the cash was closed and Meguerditch had struck his balance, would assist at the operation of the removal of the gold to this safe; merely as a matter of form, of course, though he kept one of the

keys. This operation usually took place after the rest of the clerks had left. Meguerditch would submit his statement to be initialed by the manager, and would then call out the number of bags as he threw them, one after another, into the iron safe. As soon as the manager had heard the responsive chink of the last one as it fell into its place, he knew that it was all right, that formalities were over and that he was free to go.

Now, the manager was a great smoker, and he had a careless habit, not an uncommon one in the East, of throwing away the end of his cigarette when he had finished it, without due regard to where it fell. He had done this once too often in his own house, to the no small discomfort of himself and family, and the annoyance, not to say loss, of an insurance company.

One summer evening he went, as usual, into the cash to superintend the closing operation. There was quite a lot of money on hand, and at least ten thousand pounds were to be sent down to the reserve on the morrow. Meguerditch had been more than usually hilarious in consequence. The bags were counted as usual, while the manager walked up and down the cash-room smoking vigorously, as was his wont. He was a little impatient to be off, as he had an appointment to play poker at the club.

Just as the last bag was hurled with a flourish into the safe by Meguerditch, the manager finished his

cigarette and threw the end away, without paying any particular attention where it rolled. But the tally was correct according to the statement in his hand, which after all was the important point, so he said "Good night" to Meguerditch, who responded with his usual effusiveness and respect, and then he went away.

Half-way down the stairs, however, three minutes later, that cigarette end suddenly caught fire in his memory. He remembered the little episode *chez lui* and how angry his wife had been. He reflected that the directors might be more angry still if evil consequence ensued and the bank was burned down. He remembered too having seen some waste papers lying by the safe, and he thought it possible that his cigarette might have fallen amongst them, so he flew back again into the cash.

Meguerditch was not there; he was washing his hands prior to departure; and the manager went straight into the little room at the side of the cash where the big safe was, and looked for the end of his cigarette. It was not amongst the waste papers, nor was it anywhere to be seen upon the floor. He hunted everywhere in vain till it occurred to him to look in the space between the side of the safe and the wall of the room, which was about a foot wide, and there sure enough it lay—a tiny roll of burnt-out paper and tobacco, hardly formidable enough an object, one

would imagine, to account for the very curious effect which the sight of it produced upon the manager. He suddenly started back, with both hands up to his forehead, while his eyes glared in their sockets as if he had gone mad. The manager's brain, and not the bank, was on fire!

And this was the cause of the conflagration.

Lying between the safe and the wall, in close proximity to the extinct cigarette, was a bag—one of those thousand-pound canvas bags—with the bank's own initials on it, which the manager knew so well.

For several minutes he leant back against the wall utterly deprived of the power of speech and a positive mountain of hideous possibility loomed up before his eyes. The sound of Meguerditch's voice gaily singing an Armenian national air brought him suddenly to himself, and he walked into the room with a terrible look on his face. Meguerditch was standing before a glass brushing his hair. He caught sight of the manager's expression in the mirror, and he knew that the game was up. His jaw fell six inches. But the mirror served a double purpose, and the manager also knew that his worst fears were confirmed.

The looking-glass was a wonderful invention.

But it was with his usual smile and perfect self-possession that the cashier turned and faced the danger.

"Give me your keys," said the manager, quietly, and he held out his hand.

"My keys," the Armenian answered, smilingly, "why do you ask for them?"

"Give me your keys," said the manager, more quietly still.

Meguerditch looked him full in the face and apparently saw something which he did not like, for he put his hand in his pocket and produced the keys he had held in trust for so many years.

"Come with me," said the manager, seizing him by the arm.

The manager turned the scale at 240 pounds; the cashier at about 120, and the light-weight didn't have a show. So he suffered himself to be led unresistingly away.

The manager took him into his own room and rang the bell on the table. The *odabashi*, or door-keeper, a Montenegrin of some six feet three inches in height and broad in proportion, magnificently clad and armed all over, appeared.

"Watch that man," said the manager, "he is a thief. If you let him shoot himself I'll shoot you."

A smile of ineffable superiority flit over Mr. Meguerditch's features. He hadn't the smallest intention of committing the happy dispatch.

The Montenegrin, though the manager's statement must have been a terrible shock to him, said nothing

and watched his man. There was nobody else in the bank.

The manager went to the safe, opened it and put in the bag of gold ; then he bolted off post-haste to find the directors. It took him some time, for there were three of them, all of different nationalities, but he finally ran them to earth and to the bank and there they held solemn conclave together.

They examined Meguerditch, kept in durance vile by the gigantic Montenegrin, as to what was the meaning of his action in leaving the one bag out, but this process proved the reverse of satisfactory, for he simply refused to open his lips.

They then thought it would be a good idea to examine the reserve, of which they were all so justly proud ; and, unkindest cut of all, at the point of the Montenegrin's dagger they pressed Meguerditch into service, he being the only bank clerk on the premises. There were two hundred bags to be opened and weighed, and it took them many hours to get through. Meguerditch didn't like it much, but the directors liked it infinitely less.

The result of their interesting investigations was that eighty-five of the two hundred bags proved to be dummies ; of the right weight to a nicety, but alas ! not of the right contents. The reserve had not been called upon for several years to any great extent, and Meguerditch had had it all his own way. His *modus*

operandi was as simple as it was ingenious, and goes to show what wonderful results can be attained if only sufficient intelligence be furnished by the employee and sufficient confidence by the employer. Neither had been wanting in this instance. All he had to do when throwing his bags of gold into the iron safe, while the manager walked up and down, was to wait till the latter was at the other end of the room and slip a sack into its snug hiding-place between the safe and the wall, calling out its number as he did so, and hey, presto ! the pass was made.

But Mr. Meguerditch had taken a leaf out of the manager's book and grown careless. If he had only moved his bag that night back again into his own department immediately after the manager had left, as he usually did, the fraud would not have been discovered, at any rate on that occasion. He had intended to come back quietly and "write up his accounts" that night and carry the bag off, as he had done on eighty-five previous occasions, replacing it by a dummy sack in the morning. He had carried an innocent-looking hand-bag "containing his lunch" for years. Meguerditch's bag was quite an institution ! The manager did not wait to take the cash out in the morning ; he simply unlocked the safe and went back to his work, leaving Meguerditch to do the rest.

But how, it will be asked, was not the fraud discovered when the reserve was verified, as it was every six

months, in the presence of the directors ? Again, for the simple reason of the perfect confidence reposed in Meguerditch. He it was who counted the bags, and he it was who opened them ; one here, one there, promiscuously ; for it was clearly not worth while to waste the valuable time which would have to be expended in examining each one separately. His dummy sacks were arranged with great art and ingenuity. He knew which they were, but the directors didn't. In other words, he forced cards upon them every time the reserve was inspected, and they were none the wiser. And so it came to pass in the long run that the bank was eighty-five thousand pounds to the bad—quite an item, even in prosperous times. When the facts eked out the bank shares fell ten per cent. and our opinion of Armenian cashiers a hundred. Curiously perhaps, but certainly fortunately, the next dividend was a “thumper” and the shareholders, for some reason or other, never asked any questions which could not be answered by the past master in diplomacy “in the chair.”

But where was the money ? This the son of Haik refused to tell. That it existed in some shape or form the directors had every reason to believe ; for search as they would, they could find no evidence of Meguerditch having speculated. He evidently did not believe in stocks and shares. He dealt solely in bullion.

He was, of course, arrested and tried on the charge of stealing eighty-five thousand pounds. His defence was "Not guilty." He stated that he had never taken a cent; that the bag found by the manager had slipped down without his noticing it while he was putting the cash into the safe.

We all thought this a lamentably weak defence, but it went, as the saying is. It was merely a case of circumstantial evidence, the assumption being that no one but Meguerditch could have taken the money. But it is hard to get a conviction in some countries, especially in the case of a man who has got eighty-five thousand pounds of your money wherewith to fight you, and it is not only in the British colonies that judges' decisions are deferred beyond the crack of doom.

It took the bank two years and a half to get a conviction, at the end of which time they had spent quite a comfortable percentage of the original loss in legal expenses. The sentence, when given, was three years' imprisonment, of which Meguerditch had already served two and a half. At the end of the time he emerged from confinement none the worse apparently for his incarceration. Then he went for a trip to Europe, and ever since, as I have reason to believe, he has thoroughly enjoyed himself.

I would venture to wager that, if still alive, he commands eighty-five thousand pounds' worth of the

respect and admiration of his fellow-men, and is in all probability chairman of a Society for the Propagation of Armenian Atrocities.



HEIR-AT-LAW.

CERTAINLY no more popular fellow ever joined the army of unemployed which took part in the Russo-Turkish war than Rowton Crayfurd. He had seen good service in other parts of the world under the English colours as the medals he displayed on occasions amply testified, and if he did not distinguish himself at the front and come back covered with glory, it was simply because he never had a chance. He was one of the best sportsmen I ever met, and blessed with the sweetest temper imaginable. He had been gazetted through diplomatic influence as *aide de camp* to the commander-in-chief of the Turkish forces in Europe, with the rank of *miralai*, which corresponds to our grade of full colonel, and he drew his pay regularly every month. He also drew as regularly, but with less satisfaction, upon the funds of experience created by Ottoman procrastination for the special benefit of foreign employees, whether civil or

military, in Turkish employ, and whereunto they all contribute largely in the shape of that Hope deferred which maketh the heart sick.

He passed through the various stages of expectation, hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, as time went on, that he would get his orders to go up to the front. But they never came; that is one of the marked characteristics of Turkish orders, always excepting those pertaining to decorations which can be had for the asking. Good looking, with the manners of a Chesterfield, the ladies simply swore by him. He was one of those men who always carried his wife's photograph within easy access, (inner breast pocket on the left hand side of his coat for choice), and would produce it on the smallest possible provocation. A fairly well-informed man, too, in his way, who had seen and travelled much. He could talk about most things, but on no subject did he wax more really eloquent than on the subject of married felicity.

I remember him showing me the photograph of his wife for the first time, and shall never forget the eloquent and able lecture he delivered on that occasion upon the charms of matrimony. He was a great believer in men marrying young; and always regretted, he used to say, that he had not had the good fortune to meet his wife earlier in life himself. He had been so intensely happy as a married man that he positively grudged every day which he had spent as a bachelor.

All you have to do is to choose the right woman as he had done and the rest is a foretaste of Heaven. The Wag at the Club suggested an alternative, but this made Crayfurd mad, and when in this frame of mind he had a tendency to discard logic for more drastic if less convincing methods of argument.

The photograph of Mrs. Crayfurd, which all his friends, whose name was legion, very soon knew as well as they knew her husband, represented a brunette of some twenty-six summers; certainly pretty, but when one had said that, one had said all that her portrait conveyed. There was certainly nothing, judging by appearances, to warrant the rhapsodies into which the gallant Colonel, at the mere mention of her name so invariably lapsed. Crayfurd was a great big fellow, six feet high, of fine build and commanding presence; with a good healthy eye on him, and a face open and frank as the noonday sun. It was the first time that he had left his wife since their marriage five years before, and he felt the separation keenly. He used to tell us that he could not go on like this, that he would have to have her out, whether his orders came or not; and, consequently, we were none of us surprised, when Crayfurd had given up all hope of serving the Turks more effectually than by wearing their uniform, to hear that Mrs. Crayfurd was journeying eastward on her way to join her husband. As they had no children, it was an easy matter for

her to "strike tents," as he put it, and join him.

Crayfurd was of good family and of great expectations. He was heir to a Scotch earldom. This, of course, may have accounted in some measure for his popularity. I verily believe, however, that the great majority of his friends had been grappled to his soul with hooks of steel long before he "let on" to the fact that he was a personage *in futuro*.

The present earl was his cousin, a younger man by at least ten years than Crayfurd, who must have been about seven or eight and thirty.

As soon as he got news that his wife had started, he was in a perfect fever of anxiety until she arrived. She was coming *via* Trieste, a voyage of some ten days' duration, and one might have imagined, from the state of nervousness into which he worked himself, that no ship had ever sailed the Mediterranean before without going down with all hands on board.

We were quite surprised to notice that the Earl of Clanmore was amongst the arrivals at the hotels by the same steamer which brought Mrs. Crayfurd. We had heard nothing to the effect that he was expected, and that pleasing tremor of excitement which is ever disseminated by the magic influence of a coronet fluttered through the community. Crayfurd was delighted. It was the luckiest thing in the world, he explained, that his cousin should have made up his mind to come out at that particular juncture, and

thus give his wife the benefit of an escort. She was a wretched sailor and terribly nervous. Altogether a most fortunate concatenation of circumstances, said Rowton Crayfurd. None the less was it difficult to disguise the fact that the noble earl managed effectually to conceal all traces of his proud lineage in his appearance; for a more miserable looking, undersized, unhealthy object never posed as a peer. Personal acquaintance with Mrs. Crayfurd only served to confirm the opinion which had been generally formed of her from her photograph. We all agreed that there was nothing in her, and wondered what on earth old Crayfurd could have seen to make him fall so desperately in love. But doubtless she possessed some of those wonderful ways common to the daughters of Eve for subduing the hearts of men, and after all it was no business of ours.

The Wag at the Club, very shortly after Mrs. Crayfurd's arrival, christened her husband "Rawdon Crawley." There was just enough similarity between the names and characters of the two men, and, unfortunately, it very soon became apparent that there was just enough similarity between the circumstances of the two cases to make the joke a passable one. Mrs. Crayfurd, however, save in one particular, was not in the least like "Becky Sharp." But, of course, Crayfurd was the last man to notice anything. Lookers-on at matrimony, as in the case of

other pastimes, very often see most of the game.

Crayfurd took a house for his wife, at no little expense, and used to entertain a good deal, but he could not for the life of him understand why it was that Mrs. Crayfurd did not take the position in society to which she was obviously entitled, and which, in his opinion, she was so eminently qualified to adorn. There was never any lack of men at the Crayfurds' Saturday evenings, but wives and sisters were generally otherwise engaged, at any rate they never went.

Possibly they were afraid that they wouldn't get away till Sunday morning. Crayfurd had been known to account for their absence on this ground, and suggested to his wife the advisability of changing the night. Mrs. Crawford may have considered that it wouldn't make any difference, but, whether she entertained this opinion or not, no alteration was ever made.

One day, like a bolt from the blue came Crayfurd's marching orders. He was to join headquarters in Bulgaria immediately, taking ship to Varna, and rail thence to Rasgrad, where the main Turkish division was encamped. He was torn in pieces by conflicting emotions, as many a soldier has been before him. Joy at the prospect of seeing active service, which his soul loved, and sorrow at the certainty of leaving his wife whom his soul adored. But he arranged everything in no time with martial promptitude, and within twenty-four hours from

receipt of his *yol parasi* (journey money) was on board a Turkish steamer *en route* for the seat of war. Mrs. Crayfurd was to go home that week even as she had come out, under the protecting escort of the noble Earl, but nobody, with the exception of her husband, thought the arrangement an advisable one. The parting between them had been of the most affectionate nature, and we gave old Crayfurd the most tremendous "send-off" at the club. Several of us went down to the harbour to see the last of him on board the rotten old hulk which was to take him to his destination. As he stood waving "good-bye" to us on the after deck, he looked the picture of soldierly manhood.

"Poor old Rawdon," said the Wag, who was one of the party, "I hope he'll get shot; it's the best thing that can happen to him," and then none of us spoke for a long time. Yet the Wag was not of a murderous disposition.

Two days afterwards we heard rumours that a Turkish steamer had come to grief in the Black Sea, and it did not take us very long to arrive at the conclusion that she was the one in which Rowton Crayfurd had sailed. But we got no news of him. Government departments are not prodigal of information at any time, and the *Seraskierat*, as the Turkish war office is called, is no exception to the general rule. So we had to content ourselves with vague surmise and speculation, which

in war time are more than usually rife. Somehow or other none of us cared to go to Crayfurd's house and make enquiries. This possibly may have been due to the fact that Mrs. Crayfurd was busy making arrangements for departure, and, young though some of us were at the time, we all knew enough to know that women hate to be disturbed by visitors when they are packing.

The next thing we heard was that Rowton was in hospital, dangerously ill with brain fever, that Mrs. Crayfurd and the Earl with his arm in a sling had gone home (nobody, curiously enough, had gone on board to see them off); altogether we got hopelessly mixed up over the whole business, and lost ourselves in a maze of contradictory statements, out of which a story gradually evolved itself somewhat on the following lines, which eventually came to be regarded as the only correct version.

Subsequent events certainly lent it a tinge of authenticity.

Crayfurd's steamer had been wrecked on the European shore of the Black Sea, and though no lives were lost—thanks to the admirable rocket and lifeboat service which guards that treacherous coast—thanks again to the Englishmen in command—the crew and passengers had a very rough time. Crayfurd was three parts drowned, but the very instant he had sufficiently recovered to know where he was he had got a

horse and galloped the thirty miles into town, his one idea being to relieve his wife's mind, for he was fearful lest she should hear of the wreck and go off her head with anxiety for his safety.

He arrived at his house about eleven o'clock at night.

What happened on his arrival we never knew for certain, but it eked out through that extremely unreliable source the "servants' hall," or its Eastern equivalent, that there had been a terrible scene. The *sofragi* (manservant) who had let his master in had observed that he looked curiously at a man's hat and coat which hung in the hall. He asked whose they were, and on being told that they belonged to the English *milor*, had gone rapidly upstairs. Almost immediately afterwards the *sofragi* had heard a woman's scream, then the sound of a body falling heavily on the floor, followed a moment later by a heavier fall still. Then his mistress had come to the top of the stairs and called for him as he thought in a very frightened voice to go and fetch a doctor, and on his return after a quarter of an hour his master was lying on his face, and the doctor said he had had a fit and that they must take him off to the hospital. The English *milor* was not there, he had gone to his hotel.

Such was the story as we heard it at the club and elsewhere for that matter in perhaps its fiftieth edition,

always uncorroborated, be it ever remembered, by sworn or even authenticated testimony.

They had taken his master to the hospital, and a day or two afterwards his mistress had gone away. This was the story of Andon, the Armenian *sofragi*. Possibly the stories of the other servants may have been quite different, but as we never knew what they were it is impossible to say.

Poor Crayfurd was in hospital for nearly four months. During his convalescence, which was terribly slow, he refused to see any one.

The doctors said it was just as well for none of us would have known him. He got sick leave and went home to England.

Then came a *cause célèbre* in the Divorce Court, resulting in a decree *nisi*. This, in due course, was made absolute.

A wedding followed, but not at St. George's, Hanover Square.

We were terribly grieved for poor Crayfurd, but we all thought it was foolish of him, under the circumstances, to get a divorce.

Several, however, were of opinion that his folly as compared with that of the Earl of Clanmore was as the wisdom of Solomon. On the other hand, the Wag was heard to observe that his marriage was the only manly action of which the noble Earl had ever been guilty.

Within a year the following announcement appeared in the *Times* :—

“ At Strathleigh Castle, Dumfries-shire, the Countess of Clanmore, of a son.”

But what became of Rowton Crayfurd ? You must ask me another, for I do not know.



NO. 1,682,321.

IT is probable that you will not be enamoured of his profession, for it is one which, from a Western point of view, is scarcely likely to commend itself to your approval. He was a coffee-pounder pure and simple.

Perhaps you think it makes no difference whether your coffee is pounded or grounded. It makes all the difference in the world, and all in favour of pounding.

I admit, my dear Westerner, that the possibilities of your country are boundless, quite beyond my limited capacity to conceive ; still less within my limited capacity to describe, but, in the matter of actualities, at any rate as regards coffee, you will permit me to observe that they are simply non-existent—from an Eastern point of view—of course.

I do not take upon myself to assert that coffee in Canada is not good, but I venture to maintain without fear of contradiction that coffee in Stamboul is still

better and that the brand dealt in by Hadji Ali, though guiltless of advertisement, was the finest in the world.

He possibly was in blissful ignorance of the fact, but for all that he pounded away like the village blacksmith, "week in, week out, from morn till night," for all he was worth.

This may not have been much perhaps in this world's goods, but Hadji Ali had "possibilities," or, as he considered them, certainties in store. He had good gifts, too, in the matter of physical strength. In the coffee-pounding line they are of great advantage, for the occupation is rather physical than intellectual.

His earthly domain was scarcely bigger than the conventional six-foot lot which is the inheritance of us all—Turks included—though they prefer being buried in an upright position. Just room for his coffee mortar, a little pit wherein he stood himself, a wooden box containing his ground coffee which he sold retail to the general public, and another to hold his roasted berries which he bought wholesale from the coffee roaster across the street. Above his head again was a wooden bunk (coloured by coffee grounds like a well-seasoned meerschaum) wherein Hadji Ali slept.

His pestle was five feet long and exceedingly heavy. I should not like to have been the coffee which Hadji Ali pounded.

A terribly monotonous existence he led. Whenever I passed his shop, which was twice daily for many years, he was always at his place, pounding away for dear life ; for Hadji Ali's pestle and mortar, like the mills of the Gods, ground exceedingly small, and the coffee, when it left his hands, was even as the finest wheat flour, differing only in colour, which was of a deep, rich, golden brown ; and the scent thereof—why, you could smell it a hundred yards off with the greatest ease, and, if there was anything of a wind blowing, it would think nothing of tickling your nostrils with the most delicious of odours a quarter of a mile away.

No matter how I came to make Hadji Ali's acquaintance. It took one some time to really know him, for he was nearly as brown as the coffee he pounded ; so also was his scanty apparel. He did not want much in the way of clothes, did Hadji Ali, for the nature of his occupation kept him warm all the year round.

Gradually I got on quite friendly terms with him, and learnt his story, told to the musical ring of his pestle and mortar.

Hadji Ali, like all great men, was consumed with an idea. He had a mind which reached flights far removed from coffee-pounding.

There was a fortune in store for him, as there is for all of us did we but know it. He was a firm believer

in the Turkish equivalent of the French proverb, "Everything comes to those who know how to wait;" and Hadji Ali knew perfectly well how to wait, pounding coffee the while with pertinacity worthy of a nobler occupation. I found out the idea which dominated his mind quite by accident, as indeed some of the greatest discoveries are made.

Hadji Ali had a share in the Roumelian Railway Lottery. He had paid six pounds for it, the result of his savings for several years (for coffee-pounding is not a lucrative employment) and he had made up his mind that his number, 1,682,321, was going to win the grand prize, or *Gros Lot*, as it was generally called. He had ideas, too, all his own, as to how to spend the money when once he came into his inheritance.

Hadji Ali was not alone in his belief that he was going to win a fortune by the turn of a wheel. Hundreds and thousands of people, myself included, were imbued with precisely the same idea; but none of us were so positively certain on the subject as Hadji Ali. I had several shares myself in the lottery, and consequently my chances were to that extent greater than those of my coffee-pounding friend, but I found on comparing notes, during the course of one of our many conversations, that this made not the slightest difference to him. All that he would admit was that possibly one of my numbers might draw the *Gros Lot*

a month or so before his did, which, after all, was as big a concession as I could reasonably expect him to make.

The *Gros Lot* was certainly worth the winning. It amounted to no less than twenty-four thousand pounds, and there were three drawings of this amount in the year. There were also other three drawings of twelve thousand pounds, making six altogether. I make no mention of lesser amounts, of which there were several hundreds, even down to the paltry sum of sixteen pounds, which was the smallest, because we never took the probabilities of drawing anything less than the biggest into account. Personally I believe had I drawn only the twelve thousand pound ticket I should have felt seriously aggrieved. Hadji Ali, I feel convinced, would have refused to accept it. All this, be it remembered, was prior to the repudiation of the Turkish debt. After that the deluge.

The drawings took place, as I have said, every two months, under the auspices of the State bank ; and it was my duty, in company with some dozen of my fellows, on the occasion in question, to repair at about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, to a department in the Old Seraglio palace of historic fame, where the wheel containing the numbers was kept. The operation of the drawing was an exceedingly interesting one, and by no means devoid of ceremony.

The room itself was a huge place, not altogether

unlike a theatre ; for there were seats ranged all round, with desks for the bank clerks, and a dais whereon the big-wigs, such as the Minister of Finance, or his representative, a director of the bank or his *locum tenens*, would sit and supervise proceedings. The portion reserved for the public was always crammed full with eager and expectant faces, many hundreds in number ; each one buoyed up with expectancy and hopeful for the best.

In the centre of the room stood the big wheel, which must have been at least eight feet high. It was made of glass, so that all might see that things were done fairly and above-board. In the side of it was a small door, locked with a double padlock, whereof the bank held one key and the Minister of Finance the other.

When all was in readiness, the *aide de camp* of the Minister was sent out into the street ; the object of his mission being to seize the first ragged, dirty and vulgar little boy whom he could lay hands on, and bring him to the scene of action. Frequently, the little boy protested and thought he was going to be hamstrung ; but when he found that there was a dollar fee in sight, his anxiety instantly gave place to joy.

A dollar is a wonderful medium of conversion, whether in the West or in the East.

When all was in readiness, two *hamals* (porters) fitted a crank on each side to the axle of the wheel and

turned it many times, and we could all see the myriad tickets inside tumbling over each other and turning somersaults in their eagerness to be drawn. The sound they made was like that of distant waves receding over shingle.

The little boy was hoisted up on a very high stool, and the door in the side of the wheel was unlocked. Then the little boy's arm was bared to the shoulder ; he put his hand into the wheel, wherefrom he drew one by one the requisite number of tickets. Each contained a series of five numbers, rolled up tight in the form of a miniature cigarette and gummed down. Assuming that one hundred numbers had to be drawn at each drawing, it would follow that twenty tickets were taken out of the big wheel. These were handed over to the bank clerks, who opened them out and copied the five numbers on to separate slips, which were again rolled up and gummed down. The hundred new tickets thus formed were put into quite a small wheel, standing close to the large one. This was spun round with great velocity by turning the handle some minutes, and it is no more than true to state that the tickets inside did not dance half so fast as did the hopes of the audience.

The real business of the day was now about to commence. Amid the most deathlike silence, the small wheel was opened, the small boy's arm was bared again and thrust in up to the elbow.

I could see it trembling with excitement from where I sat at the clerk's table.

The first ticket drawn out contained the number of the *Gros Lot*. The small boy handed the ticket to the *aide de camp* of the Minister of Finance, who opened it and in stentorian tones read it out amidst breathless expectation to the audience. There were few supreamer moments in a life of Oriental splendour !

The same operation was repeated for the minor prizes, until the sixteen pound category was reached, and then the crowd gradually filed out, leaving the bank clerks behind them to make out the lists of all the winning numbers for publication. These were printed and sold by the various publishing offices in the city, and were in all hands before the day was over.

Hadji Ali used to take an hour or two off from his coffee pounding when the drawings took place. It was the only holiday he ever took. He would go early, and always occupied the same place, with ever the same look of patient interest on his face. He would look across at me and smile good-humouredly.

On the evening before one of the drawings for the *Gros Lot*, I stopped, as I frequently did on my way home, at his tiny store, and said, "Good evening, Hadji. So to-morrow's the day again. I suppose there is no doubt about your winning this time ?"

"*Kim Bilir*," (who knows ?) he said, "Let us hope

so. *Allah kerim*, God's will be done, I feel hopeful. I think I shall win it this time." Then I passed on.

The next day, Hadji Ali cleaned up for the occasion, was in his place as usual, and the operation which I have just described was gone through.

I knew Hadji Ali's number by heart, and it was with a feeling of intense excitement that I heard the *aide de camp* read out its first five figures.

1,682,3—I looked across at Hadji Ali, and shall never forget the expression on his face. 2—His eyes were nearly starting from their sockets. 1—Hadji Ali had won the *Gros Lot*, twenty-four thousand pounds, and announced the fact to the audience by falling flat on his face with a terrible cry.

Then there was a commotion in the room, a hurried movement in his direction, the babble of many voices, and I saw my old friend no more. The excitement had been too much for him. He had burst a blood vessel, and Hadji Ali, the coffee pounder, lay dead, with the winning lottery ticket for twenty-four thousand pounds in his hand.



CROSSING THE BOSPHORUS.

IT was blowing great guns from the south, and not a *caiquegi* (boatman) could be induced, for love or money, to face the wind and current. When a Bosphorus *caiquegi* refuses to put a monetary value on his services, you may rest thoroughly assured that the weather is not inviting.

As a rule, the stream runs from north to south, that is from the Black Sea to the Marmora, in consequence of the prevalence of northerly breezes; but when the wind shifts round to the south and blows, as it sometimes does, for several days in succession, it has the effect of reversing the order of the currents and of upsetting everybody's calculations not to mention, on occasion, a casual *caique* or two, though to do the boatmen justice, accidents are of extremely rare occurrence.

We had been playing football, for the Rugby game travelled far afield even in those days. So long ago,

however, is it that I cannot take upon myself to make oath and say positively whether it was the Welsh system which found favour amongst us or not ; whether we played three three-quarter backs or four ; two halves or a whole ; a close or an open scrimmage, and whether or not we screwed the scrum. These details have faded from my memory, but I do distinctly remember that we all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, which is after all a point quite as important as any other.

Lesley (one of our forwards and a terror to tackle), surgeon of H. M. S. *Gazelle*, then stationed at Constantinople, was staying with me, and we had been foolish enough after the game to stop at the club to play poker and imbibe whiskies and sodas for longer than we should have done. The consequence was that we speedily met the reward of our misdeeds by losing our last steamer up the Bosphorus, whereat Lesley, I regret to say, used language quite unfit for publication. Our only alternative was to take a carriage (an operation almost as expensive as the poker had been) and drive six miles or so up the European shore to a village opposite my quarters on the other side. Here we reckoned confidently upon getting a *caïque* to take us across. But we reckoned without our host, for when we got there the cupboard was bare, as we discovered to our dismay five minutes after we had burnt our ships behind us by dismissing the

carriage which had brought us from town.

It would have been easy to drive back whence we had come had we but kept the carriage, which we hadn't. It would have been easy too to stay where we were and find a lodging for the night in the *cafinet* of the village. But this would not have been pleasant, for previous experience of similar quarters did not inspire us with any desire to renew their acquaintance. To say that you have a lively time when you spend the night in a Greek *cafinet* does not necessarily imply that you have good sport or enjoy yourself. As a matter of fact, the game is not worth the candle, though without the candle you stand mighty little chance of securing the game, and when you've got it, as often as not you wish you hadn't. A Greek *cafinet* is the most densely populated habitation on the surface of the globe. It can give a North-West log-hut, not to mention certain frame-built hotels on the prairie, a million to the square inch and never feel the odds. I speak whereof I know, for I have been in both.

We stood on the quay for a minute or two debating together as to what we should do, and finally decided that if we could, by hook or by crook, get a boatman to face the storm, we would risk our lives on the water rather than our skins on shore. At least we would die like men if we could not fall like one of the princes.

There was only one chance, to rout out a *caiquegi* and induce him, by fair means or foul, to take us across. We accordingly made a bee line for the *cafnet*, where I knew all the *caiquegis* of the village would be congregated at this hour—about eight o'clock—after their evening meal. But not, oh, whiskey-loving Westerner, as you might possibly imagine, upon spirituous purpose bent. They eschewed all liquor more noxious than coffee, strong and pungent, wherewith and cigarettes galore, they solaced themselves till bedtime came. Then the married ones went home and the bachelors quietly slipped from off the wooden stools, whereon they sat, to the earthen floor, whereon they slept—*Ce n'était pas plus difficile que cela*.

The *cafnet* was choke full of cigarette and *narghileh* (the water-pipe or hubble-bubble) smoke. *Caiquegis* of all sorts and conditions were sitting about—some on small stools playing *trick-track* or *tavlieh* (our backgammon) some playing cards—though neither game for money—some cross-legged on the floor, some on a divan which ran all round the room. None of them took the smallest notice of us as we entered, though they all knew perfectly well what we wanted. There was no hurry—there seldom is in Turkey. Serious negotiations of this nature had to be undertaken with becoming gravity and decorum. Besides, it was the old story of supply and demand all over again.

As a rule the weather was fine and there were more *caïques* to be had than passengers to fill them. Then the boatmen would fight for your custom, but on this occasion the conditions were reversed. Demand was considerably in excess of supply, and we knew intuitively that the price would rise.

"*Ti thelete ?*" asked the *cafégi*, bustling up as soon as we were seated.

"*Fere mas dio caféthés*" (Bring us a couple of coffees). I answered, whereat Lesley fretted and fumed, for, like Mr. Justice Stareleigh, his temper bordered on the irritable, and brooked not delay, but he had to possess his soul in patience.

As we sipped our coffee I asked the *cafégi*, an old acquaintance, if he thought we should be able to get a boat to cross to-night, but he shook his head.

"*Athunatos*" (impossible) "that man over there," pointing to a Greek who was talking and gesticulating somewhat excitedly to a group in a corner, "has been trying for an hour to persuade the men to take him across, but they will not go. The *chelibí* will have to stay here to-night."

There were consequently three of us in the same boat, or to be accurate, desirous of being in the same boat, could we only get one to get into.

I crossed the room and added my arguments to those of the Greek, who, when he found that I and my companion were bent upon the same errand as he

was, was with difficulty restrained from embracing the pair of us. Such effusiveness was no novelty to me, but Lesley did not appreciate it.

Finally, seeing our endeavours were of no avail, we decided, in high dudgeon, to walk to the next village, a distance of about a mile, where there were other and, as we hoped, more valorous *caiquegis*.

When we got outside there was no question but that it would require a good boatman and a better boat to face the wind and waves. Though the storm was behind us, we had some difficulty in keeping our feet, for it came up in great gusts and had no more respect for us than if we had been weathercocks. The Greek, talking incessantly and abusing the whole tribe of boatmen, from Dan to Beersheba, forged on ahead. We following close in his footsteps.

"Do you know this fellow?" asked Lesley as the storm lulled for a moment.

"No," I answered, "never saw him in my life before. Why?"

"Oh! Nothing," he replied, but something in his voice made me repeat my question.

"Well, if you really want to know, he's mad, that's all."

"Mad! How on earth do you know? If you come to that, my dear fellow, he's no madder than we are to want to get across the Bosphorus on a night like this."

"I was watching him closely while you were talking

in the *cafnet*, and I tell you he's as mad as a hatter. I was assistant in a private asylum before I joined the service, and you can't deceive me."

I hadn't the smallest desire to deceive him, but I had a wholesome dread of insanity in every shape and form, being a bit of a madman myself.

Suddenly we heard voices on the water, and recognised the splash of oars. As we turned a corner of the quay into a small bay, more or less protected from the wind, we could at least hear ourselves speak with a moderate degree of comfort, and made out through the gloom the form of a huge fishing *caïque* approaching us on its way down from the Black Sea.

"Here's our chance," said the Greek, excitedly. "These big boats will face anything," and he yelled like a maniac to attract the attention of an old Turk, the captain, who was sitting cross-legged, turbaned and fur-wrapped on the raised poop in the stern and steering with an oar some twenty feet in length. The *caïque* was pulled by eight men.

As they came in shore as close as possible to avoid the force of the up current, we induced them to stop alongside the quay, where there was comparatively smooth water. In five minutes the Greek, who would let no one else get a word in, had concluded a bargain; we were to be landed at my quarters on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, in consideration of a gold *lira*,

say five dollars and call it square. In another minute we were "all aboard."

The boat was filthily dirty, smelling vilely of fish, and bearing every evidence of the trade in which it was engaged, for a coating of silver scales covered it almost completely from stem to stern. We, however, being dressed in our football rig, were not very particular ; but the Greek, who was clad apparently in his Sunday or store clothes, began to find fault, in none of the politest terms, the very instant we had pushed off from the shore. He wanted to know what they meant by not cleaning their boat before embarking passengers, and declared that the fee they had charged was a positive swindle. A minute or two before he had been howling to be taken on board at any price.

I did my best to calm him down, for I had no particular fancy for the company we were in. However, my expostulations only seemed to make him the more irritable, and at a sign from Lesley, I let him alone, whereupon he began to abuse the old captain, of impassive demeanour, who paid not the slightest attention, possibly because I had taken the precaution of whispering to him as I got on board that the man was mad. The Turks venerate insane people, and let them do just as they please. *Delli* (mad) Mustapha roamed the streets of Constantinople naked as the day he was born in broad day for years, and no change

was made in his costume by official decree, until such time as he accosted a foreign ambassadress upon the Galata bridge. But this, though it is plagiarism to say so, is another story.

Finding that his remarks produced no effect, friend Greek became more and more abusive, despite our efforts to quiet him, yet still not one word in reply could he elicit from the impassive old statesman at the helm. As his remarks, however, were in Turkish, everything that he said was perfectly understood by the rest of the crew, though, fortunately, the work of getting the *caïque* through the water occupied most of their attention.

Lesley and I felt very uncomfortable.

Finally a voice came from one of the two men rowing stroke, who apparently was exasperated by the taunts of the Greek. He said something to the effect that no better behaviour could be expected from a *Giaour* and a *Rayah* to boot.

The captain yelled to him to hold his tongue, that the man was mad, but the words were hardly out of his mouth when the madman was at his throat.

(Be it known that the term "*Giaour*" is a highly opprobrious one, and is forbidden by law, though this may seem strange to Western ideas, seeing that being translated, it means nothing more than "infidel." A Greek will stand a good deal, but mad or sane, he won't stand being called an "unbeliever." You may

disparage the good name of his mother, assail the reputation of his wife, and he may agree to assess damages on a cash basis, but call him a *Giaour* and nothing short of blood will satisfy him.)

Lesley and I were on to him like a shot, and dragged him off, though how we managed it in the dark, with the boat pitching and tossing like a cockle-shell, without an accident, I have never been able to understand. However, between us we got him down and sat on him, and the poor devil's much-prized Sunday clothes suffered, I fear, considerably from contact with the scales.

Lesley evidently knew how to tackle a maniac and acted scientifically. I didn't, but obeyed impulse.

The Turks never moved, but went on stolidly digging out at their oars.

Half stifled as he was, the Greek finally came to terms ; and we let him have his liberty on the distinct understanding that he was not to open his mouth again till we reached the other side and were safe on shore. He seemed perfectly sensible and rational now and even laughed at the incident. I weakened in consequence on the insanity theory, and said to Leslie, "My dear fellow, the man's no more mad than you are," whereupon he made the sapient remark, "That's all you know about it."

Nothing of moment happened till the *caique*, some twenty minutes later, drew up alongside the quay in

front of my house ; and it was with a feeling of the most intense relief that I handed the money to the captain and hopped out of the boat followed by Lesley. I naturally expected the Greek to follow, but to my astonishment he remained seated in the bottom of the *caïque*, smiling placidly.

“Aren’t you coming out ?” I asked, apprehensively.

“No,” he said, quite serenely ; “I’m going to get them to take me half a mile further down. It will be more convenient for me than to land here.”

This meant pulling for that distance dead in the teeth of the terrific wind and current, and I knew that if they did it at all, it would take them at least an hour ; besides, it formed no part of the bargain.

I began to expostulate with him, when at a sign, as it seemed to me, from the captain, and in an incredibly short space of time, the mast was stepped in the forward thwart by the bow-oar, and a huge lug-sail was fluttering in the wind. In ten seconds the boat was fifty yards from the shore.

As the Greek realized what had happened, he stood up, and with a wild yell for the second time that night hurled himself at the throat of the man who had called him a *Giaour*.

This, standing on the quay, we saw as in a flash for the boat was lost to sight almost immediately, and we could hear nothing as it seemed to us, but the sound of a furious struggle, yells and screams from the

Greek and curses from the Turks, gradually growing fainter as the boat flew like an arrow before the wind.

Then came two revolver shots in rapid succession.

Fired by whom ? By the Greek at the Turks ? By the Turks at the Greek ? We could not tell.

It seemed to our excited imagination that even above the howl of the wind and storm we could hear the muffled voice of the old captain, whom we pictured sitting placidly cross-legged in the same attitude on the poop, giving the order to his crew, "heave the dog of a Christian overboard !"

We neither of us slept comfortably that night.

Nothing could be done till the morning in the way of making enquiries ; but next day I naturally set to work with the view of discovering whether our suspicions were confirmed. To no purpose, however. Enquiry at the *cafinet* where we had first met the Greek led to no result. Nobody knew him, or where he came from ; and moreover, nobody knew anything about the *caïque* which had taken us across. I have little doubt in my own mind, however, as to what became of our fellow passenger.



THROUGH A PAIR OF GLASSES DARKLY.

“SUCH a nice man, too ; such a very nice man.” Nobody for a moment believed that there could be anything wrong about him, and when rumours of a discreditable nature began to be circulated on his account (rumours are invariably discreditable), we were all furious and only worshipped our idol the more.

A major in the army ; regular army, if you please ; nothing militiuous or volunteery about him, for one of us looked him up in the Army List ; an old copy, it is true ; but the confirmation of his respectability thus obtained served to silence traducers, for the time being at all events.

Then he always had lots of money, which sort of smooths things generally in foreign climes ; and in the charm of his personality, which was great, the fact that he had omitted to bring or present any letters of introduction came somehow to be overlooked, which was foolish.

And so in due course it came about that Erskine grew to be recognised as an essential factor in all social functions. No one could lead a *cotillon* as he could ; and certainly no one was a better hand at brewing, or, for the matter of that, of imbibing claret and other cups. He started a pack of hounds which ran for a whole season, and a four-in-hand which ran for a week. Altogether a great acquisition.

He went everywhere, did everything, and always had more engagements on hand than he could possibly fill.

He certainly played high, and was never known to refuse to take the bank at *baccarat*, or play *chouette* at *écarté* against the world. What is more, he almost invariably won.

Though he must have been close on forty, he was perfectly sound in wind and limb, and could hold his own in all games with many of us fifteen years his junior. His only trouble was weak eyesight. He wore a *pince-nez* in the day time and a pair of dark blue spectacles at night, though only when playing cards or reading. He could not stand the glare of the lamplight. It hurt his eyes.

On one occasion when he had won quite a large sum at *écarté* some one remarked that he believed the blue spectacles brought him luck, and Erskine didn't seem to like it. Nobody likes allusion to his physical infirmity, however slight.

A stranger Englishman turned up one day, and was naturally introduced at the club. (We were very hospitable at the club, and when people were strangers we often took them in. Sometimes they returned the compliment.)

Certain remarks made by the Englishman, at a friend's house, apropos of Erskine, whose name happened to be mentioned, were of a nature to set us all thinking.

What he said was : "That's not Talbot Erskine, late of the ——th Rifles, who always wins at cards when he wears blue spectacles, is it ?"

On being told that it was, and being pressed for an explanation, he evidently thought he was on delicate ground and refused to commit himself.

On another occasion and to different people he was reported to have remarked that he wondered how long it would be before Erskine had another attack of D.T.'s.

This also came round to our ears and made us extremely uncomfortable. It wasn't possible that a man of Erskine's physique and proficiency in sport could ever——but we very soon found that it was.

The stranger Englishman only stayed a few days—the inside of a week. On the night that he left, we missed Erskine from his place in the card room. On making enquiries we learned that the major was con-

fined to his lodgings, having been indisposed during the whole time of the stranger Englishman's visit.

Somebody went to his lodgings, which were close to the club, to find out what was the matter. In about ten minutes he came back again, looking rather white.

"I say, you fellows, some of you had better come over to Erskine's room. He's got about the worst attack of D.T.'s I ever saw. He's like a raving maniac, and his landlady is scared out of her wits. I expect he'll tear the house down or do something desperate if he isn't made fast."

Though the room was full at the time, as he spoke in English, only a few of us understood and some three or four followed him out of the club.

"Better send for Stubber," he said, "he ought to have been called in long ago."

Stubber was an ex-naval doctor of great experience in such cases, who was always ready to take charge of patients of this description. "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind," and they did say that Stubber was occasionally on the verge of a similar malady himself.

Be this as it may, we despatched a messenger for Stubber, and went to Erskine's rooms.

At the door we met his Greek landlady, white with terror, and invoking all the saints in her calendar.

Erskine was in his room, rushing up and down in his shirt and trousers, threatening the world generally

with instant death. He was swinging a pair of light Indian clubs, at which exercise he was an expert and, although we could see that the man was completely off his head, the dexterity with which he manipulated them was quite extraordinary.

Lying open on the floor of his bed-room was a small Gladstone bag which contained nothing but bottles of brandy packed head and tail in their straw sheaths. The bag held exactly one dozen and of the dozen five were empty ; the assumption being that Erskine had drunk their contents in something over forty-eight hours.

Suddenly he stopped and made a wild dash at himself in the looking-glass, which he smashed into a thousand pieces at a blow. He then caught sight of his riding-boots, which were standing in their trees in a corner of the room. He evidently thought that there was a man in them ; a man, moreover, whom he did not love, for he hurled one club at about the height of his imaginary enemy's head, and then, yelling out with a most awful imprecation, "No, you don't," he closed with his visionary assailant, throwing himself against the wall, exactly in the attitude of a man who tries to tackle and throw another.

This was our chance ; we all closed in behind him, and in a very few minutes had him overpowered and on his bed.

Then Stubber appeared on the scene, and we were

glad to feel that the responsibility of handling him was off our shoulders.

"He must go to the hospital," said Stubber. "I cannot treat a case like this here. Meanwhile, I will write a prescription," and he hurriedly wrote one which we hastened to have made up.

The prescription included an order for a strait-waistcoat ; and in another half-hour Erskine, bound so that he could move neither hand or foot, and gagged to boot—for from his howls one would have imagined that he was being murdered—was duly transplanted to the hospital.

There, we learnt, he had a very lively time, and made things interesting for all who came near him.

Very soon after Erskine went to the hospital, one of us received an envelope addressed in an unknown hand, containing nothing but a cutting from an old French newspaper, describing how a man had been discovered at a continental watering place using cards marked on the back with some preparation resembling luminous paint which was invisible to the rest of the players but perfectly patent to him owing to the fact that he wore dark blue spectacles. Some of us felt quite badly about it and wanted to go and visit one of the patients in the hospital but he wasn't well enough to be seen.

On his recovery, which was long drawn out, Erskine did not put in an appearance again at the club, but

disappeared from our horizon, leaving in many hearts of one of the sexes and in many pockets of the other an aching void.

I was on a steamer, some five years later, on my way home *via* the Mediterranean and occupied the proud position of being the only male passenger amongst a crowd of women and children, the wives and families of American missionaries, who were returning to the States after a prolonged course of proselytism in Armenia. I can justly state without exaggeration that I have found myself in more congenial society. I do not doubt that the missionaries' wives did their duty nobly in that particularly uninteresting, and to my mind, misguided state to which it may have pleased their husbands to call them, but I cannot truthfully say that they shone with any particular degree of lustre in the capacity of fellow passengers. As for their children they were a race apart. I have ever since included them in a special litany of my own and attribute subsequent troubles in the United States to the fact that they have duly arrived at maturity.

It was therefore with a feeling of intense dejection that I learnt on coming on board at Malta, where we spent a couple of days, just before the ship sailed again that we had not added to our list of passengers. It was the first time, the steward told me, that they had had such an experience; but it was in the

middle of summer, and Malta traffic was light.

I was leaning over the bulwark as the anchor was being weighed when I noticed a *dyso* (Maltese boat), containing a couple of passengers and their luggage being pulled rapidly towards the ship from the shore.

The captain caught sight of them and yelled out, "If you want to take passage with me, you'll have to be quick about it, for I'm under way;" and the boatman redoubled his efforts to come alongside.

The companion ladder was lowered and a couple of men came quickly on deck their luggage being hauled up after them.

My pulse quickened perceptibly. They were both decent-looking fellows, one considerably younger than the other and both evidently Britishers.

That tired feeling which comes over you when you know a man's face perfectly well but can't put a name to him took possession of me. Psychologists have yet to account satisfactorily for the reason why you can remember the first letter of a man's name and not the rest of it. I was quite certain that one of the new passengers' names began with E, but I could not for the life of me supply the balance.

I was racking my brains to try and "locate" him, as we say on this continent, when my eye fell on a small Gladstone bag considerably the worse for wear which had come up with the strangers' luggage. This seemed strangely familiar, though why I did not

know. Gladstone bags are much of a muchness all the world over.

The new arrivals had gone to fix things in their respective cabins, and I, consumed with curiosity which demanded instant satisfaction, took advantage of their absence to enquire their names of the steward.

"Lieutenant Dermott is the young one, sir, I think," he said. "I know him for he came out with us last year but I do not know the other gentleman. I will tell you who he is as soon as I know myself."

One makes friends quickly on board ship, and not many hours had passed before the new arrivals and myself were discussing the charms of female American missionaries. And still I could not fix the elder man.

Shortly afterwards several of the ladies in question accompanied by their offspring aforesaid appeared on deck and in five minutes I had "located" Major Erskine. There was no mistaking his deportment with ladies. It always seemed to me that the older and uglier and more uninteresting they were, the greater pains he took to ingratiate himself with them.

He had changed greatly since I had last seen him having grown a beard and was moreover far grayer than before.

I took an early opportunity of recalling myself to his memory and he was positively over-joyed, or appeared to be, at meeting me again.

Dermott and he, it appeared, were merely casual

acquaintances who had been introduced to each other that very morning in Valetta.

That night, as we paced the deck, after everybody else had retired he told me his story. How that, after the little episode of the five empty brandy bottles and the strait-waistcoat to which he alluded as "that unfortunate occurrence," he had never touched a drop of liquor ; that he had made up his mind to go in for a complete cure. That he had done so with the most remarkable results.

It appeared that there was dipsomania in his family his own being by no means an isolated case and the tales that he told harrowed up my youthful blood to such an extent that I hardly slept a wink.

It would have been impossible for the most ardent teetotal lecturer to expatiate upon the evils of drunkenness with greater zeal and fervour than did ex-toper Erskine. He talked to me as if I were a confirmed drunkard myself and as if *he* had once sat upon *my* head whereas as a matter of fact it was the other way on. As we turned in somewhere in the small hours the devil tempted me and I weakly fell. I could not resist asking him if his eyes were better and if he still had to wear blue spectacles at night. He looked at me narrowly and answered shortly that his eyes were all right now.

The satisfactory and thoroughly consoling part of the whole thing, however, was that he was radically

and completely cured not only of his unfortunate propensity but of his weak sight and I could not but admire the strength of character of which he had given such abundant proof in undergoing the severe treatment which he had so graphically described. It is always refreshing not to say encouraging to see a man break the neck of a bad habit by sheer force of will.

All the women and children in the ship went mad over Erskine. He played shuffle-board and rope quoits and deck cricket with the children and sang Moody's & Sankey's hymns by the score to their mothers for two whole days. Then he got—sea-sick.

He was a wretched sailor he had told us and as the weather was beginning to get rough we naturally attributed his absence from meals to this cause.

One of the under-stewards in the afternoon, however, reported that he could not get into Erskine's cabin; the door being locked on the inside. The captain was duly informed of the fact but took no notice of it.

No signs of Erskine that night at dinner. No signs of him again next morning at breakfast; then Dermott and I began to grow uneasy and together we interviewed the captain.

I told him of my former experience, five years back, and, though I did not for a moment imagine that we

were in for a recurrence of the same trouble a suspicion that it might be the case began to make itself unpleasantly felt.

"Why, in the name of thunder, didn't you tell me this before?" was all the consolation I got from the the captain. "We have had no weather to speak of to make a man sea-sick who has knocked about as much as Major Erskine has. If he gives no signs of life in an hour I'll break open the door."

Dermott and I went and listened at the Major's cabin but at first we could hear nothing. Then every now and again a clinking noise broke upon our ears which sounded like the contact of glass against glass as if empty bottles were rolling on the cabin floor and knocking up against each other.

Our fears began to take definite shape.

At the appointed time the captain came down himself accompanied by the ship's carpenter. He battered away at the door and failing to get a reply, the carpenter in a couple of minutes had the door down. Then we all started back in horror.

On his bunk, fully dressed, lay Erskine stone dead, his head and one arm hanging over the side one hand tightly clenched touched the floor. It was badly cut but it was not bleeding then though he had evidently died from loss of blood as the floor of the cabin testified.

The Gladstone bag was lying open just as it had

been five years before. There was the same neatly packed assortment of brandy bottles in straw sheaths lying heads and tails with this difference only that three instead of five were empty. One had been smashed to pieces by the rolling of the ship. He must have clenched his hand upon a broken piece of glass and severed an artery for there was an awful gash between the first finger and thumb.

There was no doctor on board and no inquest was held but to the American Missionaries' wives he died of heart disease. He was buried next day at sea and only the children played shuffle-board for the rest of the voyage.



MUSTAPHA.

THERE was only one other saloon passenger by the Austrian Lloyd steamer *Achilles* for Varna when I went on board—a tall man who spoke fluent German to the steward—I gave my orders in French. The inference is obvious and not for nearly twenty-four hours did we discover that we were both Britishers. This is not to be claimed as an unique experience by any manner of means for many people have encountered it before but at least it may be accepted in support of my assurance that neither of us up to this point in the journey had exceeded the traditional cordiality of his fellow countrymen *en voyage*.

The interesting fact of our common nationality was determined in this wise. On getting out of the train at Roustchuk one of us trod on a dog and said “damn” in a tone of annoyance; the other said “hallo?” in a tone of surprise.

That was all, yet we have been firm friends ever since.

Roustchuck is on the Danube, which is bridgeless in that part of the world. This is a great disadvantage, especially in the early days of spring.

Challis, for such was my newly-found compatriot's name, was no less in a hurry to reach England than I was, and when we found that the river was impassable, we rang the changes with great emphasis on the monosyllable which had proclaimed the nationality of my companion.

The ice was expected to begin to break up at any moment. The last sleigh had crossed the morning we arrived, and orders had been given by the Turkish Governor of the Sandjak that no more journeys were to be made across it, as it was considered unsafe for either sleighs or foot passengers.

Giurgevo, on the other side of the river, where one took train for Bucharest, Vienna, Cologne, Brussels and Ostend, was only a mile and a half away. Yet a mile and a half is quite a long distance when you have no means of traversing it.

Enquiry in the town led us to the comforting conclusion that it might be a week, possibly a fortnight, before a boat could cross; and we were consequently hung up with the certainty of indefinite sojourn before us, in the most uninteresting, squalid and dirty of Turkish provincial towns.

There were some twenty other passengers besides ourselves, whom we had picked up along the line of railway, but, as they were all Orientals, they were naturally in no particular hurry ; for haste is a condition altogether foreign to the Eastern mind. It really didn't seem to matter to them in the very least whether they got across or whether they didn't.

We took counsel together, for time was really valuable to both of us, the accommodation offered by the *locanda* (inn) was uninviting in the extreme, and we loathed the idea of being, as Challis expressed it, "tied by the leg in a hole like Roustchuck."

"Why can't we hire a carriage and drive up this side of the river till we come to a place where we can cross?" he asked.

Why not indeed ? The suggestion was certainly worthy consideration, and I tumbled to it like a shot. If we could drive up one shore we could certainly drive down the other. With far less difficulty, moreover, for in those days the roads in Roumania were good ; in Bulgaria they were abominable.

All Englishmen are mad in Turkey, at least they are invariably accounted so by the natives, and are always known as *Delli Inglis*.

The foregoing proposition, therefore, when we came to communicate it, was regarded by our fellow-travellers as being quite in keeping with our national character. They expressed no surprise at our deter-

mination, but simply shrugged their shoulders and went on playing *trick-track* (backgammon) and smoking, occupations of quite sufficient interest to absorb all their faculties for a week on end. The *locandagi* (innkeeper) deluged the project in cold water, but we naturally discounted his views, seeing that it was clearly more to his interest that we should stay than go. This may have been unchristianlike on our part, but it was born of experience.

We would go and hunt up the Vice-Consul. Vice-Consuls are great institutions, but in a place like Roustchuck it is only under peculiar circumstances, such as I am describing, that their utility becomes specially apparent. That they have other uses I am willing to believe, but they are evidently of the occult order.

The Vice-Consul was, unfortunately, "not at home." This does not mean that he was "out," because we heard him inform the *cavass* who took in our cards that he was not able to receive visitors. We could of course only express our regret, but we did not doubt his assertion.

There are very few teetotallers amongst the Vice-Consular corps of the Levant.

The indisposition of the Vice-Consul, however, was nobly atoned for by the extreme civility of his clerk, a bright young Greek, to whom we unburdened ourselves. He caught on in an instant. Nothing easier.

He knew the very man who would take us and think nothing of it. He called the *cavass*.

Ibrahim ! Seully Mustapha arabagi guelsin tchabouk (tell Mustapha the stable-keeper to come here immediately), and in five minutes Mustapha, an old Turk, with a long white beard and a huge red worsted comforter twisted round his head like a turban, stood before us.

He would take the *chelibis* to Sistova, where certainly the river would be open, if not to-day, to-morrow, or the day after, but the roads were not good, for the thaw had long set in, and it was a long way, twenty-four hours off at least. The Turks always compute distance by time. As a fact, the distance as the crow flies was about eighty miles.

We asked him how long he thought it would be before we could get across from Roustchuck, but he couldn't say. It might be only a few days, it might be three weeks. *Allah* knew, he didn't.

Finally, after endless haggling over the price, we agreed to pay him five pounds to land us in Sistova, provided he did it within the time he had specified.

"When would he be ready ?" we asked.

Now immediately, if we liked.

This suited us down to the ground, and we repaired to our *locanda* in company with the Vice-Consular clerk, where it was agreed that Mustapha should come and fetch us.

Challis expressed incredulity when told that Mustapha was to take us right through without any change of horses, but he did not know the capabilities of Roumelian ponies when driven by a Turk.

We calculated that as the roads were far better on the other side, in Roumania, we should have no difficulty in getting relays of horses, and that consequently we should make Giurgevo in considerably less time when once we had got across.

The expression on Challis's face when Mustapha drove his *araba* into the court-yard in front of the mud hut, dignified by the name of hotel, was a sight to see, and betokened very little confidence in our ability to make the journey in such a conveyance. It was the roughest possible kind of country cart on four wheels. One spoke was missing in the near hind wheel, two in the off, and the canvas covering which was to protect us from the weather was almost but not entirely one large hole. Fortunately we had any quantity of wraps. We needed them all.

Mustapha, sitting with his feet well tucked under him on the narrow board which served as the driver's seat, his knees almost touching his horses' tails, drove up at full gallop, throwing his steeds back on their haunches at the door of the *locanda* in truly magnificent style.

The harness consisted entirely of raw-hide, tied here and there in places where it had been broken.

There was not a buckle in the entire outfit, and Mustapha carried no whip. He did not want one. His words were veritable scorpions of a nature to wound deeply even equine feelings, and Mustapha, as we subsequently found, had a never failing supply on hand.

The cart was filled, as it seemed to us, with hay ; and we wondered where on earth room was to be found for us and our baggage.

Our departure caused quite an excitement in the town, and all the notables, with the exception of the Vice-Consul, turned out to see us off.

We finally crept in on top of the hay, and after stowing our *impedimenta*, including a plentiful supply of tinned tongues, potted meats, etc., we found that once we were all packed and ready to start it was none too plentiful. We had not gone many miles when we wished there had been twice as much ; for no one who has not travelled over the high-ways and by-ways of Eastern Europe in a springless cart can lay any claim to experience worth mentioning in the jolting line.

A cheer, feeble in volume and ironical in intention as it seemed to us, was raised as we drove out. Once clear of the houses Mustapha made no further use of the lines, but left them lying loose on his horses' backs. All his driving was done with the voice, and the way those rats of ponies obeyed orders was something extraordinary.

The reins came in handy when we were going down hill, and then they were really required, for some of the declivities we descended seemed to us like the side of a house. We had no brake, but Mustapha tied the hind wheels up with a bit of hide and away we went always at the same round trot.

In about five minutes we had left the town well behind us, and then, to our surprise, old Mustapha said something of specially insulting nature to his ponies who stopped short as if in indignant protest.

"What on earth is the matter now, we shall never get on at this rate," said Challis. But I was no wiser than he.

Mustapha stood up on his narrow seat and looked round. Very soon he seemed to have found what he was looking for, as he gave a shrill whistle between two of his fingers. Then he sat down and off we went again. We thought that he was merely tendering a farewell salute to his wife and family, and took no more notice of the occurrence. As we subsequently found however he was rounding up an extra pony.

A short time afterwards, Challis gave a start. "What is this confounded thing poking me in the back?" he said. "This is the third time I have noticed it."

We were both sitting with our backs against the canvas screen which hung down behind the cart, and,

being packed exceedingly tightly, owing to our wraps and valises, he had some difficulty in moving, in order to discover the reason.

When we lifted the flap of the screen, we discovered to our surprise that there was a third pony following us, which, in his endeavours to get at the hay in the cart, had been poking his nose into the small of my fellow-traveller's back.

I called Mustapha's attention to the fact, and he instantly stopped short. He stood up again on his seat, and, in language which such lingering sense of decency as is left me prohibits my transcribing, he solemnly cursed the offender's family for several generations back. The pony slunk off as if heartily ashamed of himself, and put some thirty yards between himself and his master, nor did he venture to offend again.

Mustapha's ponies were the sorriest, thinnest, most absolutely miserable looking quadrupeds imaginable, but they knew their work and what's more they did it. They could not have stood more than 13.2 at the most, and were literally nothing but skin and bone. I doubt, however, whether any pure bred *Neghib* Arab steed with a pedigree as long as your arm could have accomplished what these Roumelian rats of ponies did, in better time or with less evidence of fatigue.

In about two hours after we had started, Mustapha

called to his horses to stop. He got down slowly from his seat and shook himself; whereupon the ponies immediately did the same. He gave to each of them a mouthful of hay, and as soon as they had finished munching it, he solemnly and with great deliberation, walked to the near pony's head and pulled its ears for about fifty times in succession as if he were milking a cow. Then he pulled its forelock and its mane in the same manner. This operation lasted several minutes. When it was over he proceeded to jerk at the animal's tail, as if he were bent on pulling it out by the roots, accompanying each movement with a spasmodic grunt, and putting his foot against the croup in order to get a better purchase. We naturally thought he was going to pull its leg but he wasn't. As soon as he was through with number one he went through with precisely the same performance with number two, and both ponies seemed to enjoy it immensely.

Mustapha talked to each the while in a low undertone, using the most endearing and affectionate epithets; he called them the light of his eyes, the joy of his heart, his shining stars, his jewels, his pearls beyond price.

This ebullition of feeling I could only imagine, was intended in some way to compensate for the awful insults and reflections upon their parentage, which he had, up to the present with scarcely a moment's

intermission, hurled at their devoted heads *en route*.

We watched the performance with the greatest interest, for it was our first experience of *massage à la turque* applied to horseflesh. Finally he whistled to the third pony, which came cantering up immediately in answer to his call. He unharnessed number one—no lengthy operation—and the new-comer quietly took its place. The animal that was turned loose instantly began to browse, and we left him, when we started off at a gallop, enjoying a full meal.

I asked Mustapha if he intended to leave the horse behind, to which enquiry he offered the Turkish equivalent of “not much,” and, true enough, shortly afterwards, when we had resumed our normal pace, friend Rosinante was trotting calmly alongside the cart. He had had his dinner and made up for lost time.

At the end of the fourth hour, the same operation was repeated; the loose horse taking the place of number two, who did precisely the same as his companion had done before him, taking all he wanted in the way of green stuff from the roadside and then cantering after the wagon.

A Turk is a most uncommunicative person, especially when he is engaged in business. All you can expect him to do is to answer your questions in the negative or affirmative, and conversation is therefore difficult to sustain. We were both longing to

know whether he had taught the horses himself, or whether these exemplary habits were peculiar to the breed ; but we elicited extremely little information on the subject, for Mustapha was no more communicative than his fellow countrymen. Moreover this class of Mussulman has a grand contempt for Christians and does not scruple to show it.

At sunset, Mustapha made his toilet for the night. He took off his turban and rearranged it in such wise that nothing of his head and face was visible except his eyes. (The Turks hold, and there is much in their contention, that so long as the head is warm the rest of the body follows suit.) Then he unwound his waistband, half silk, half cotton. When he began this operation we thought he was never going to stop. He tied one end to the top of one of the wheels, then holding the other he proceeded to walk backwards its entire length, at least thirty feet. Then he wound himself up, revolving on his own axis in dignified fashion till he had reached the wheel. By this means he could get any tension he liked on the waistband. When he had finished he looked about half his normal size. After this he said his prayers.

We had started about three in the afternoon, and did not stop save for the five minutes' rest every two hours until the small hours of the following morning, when we were so thoroughly sore and shaken that we positively cried for mercy. Mustapha told us that, by

making a detour of a mile or two we could strike a small village and put up there for a few hours.

This we decided to do, and about 3 a.m. we drew up in the middle of a small collection of mud huts, which constituted the village he had alluded to.

Mustapha routed out the innkeeper, a stolid-looking Armenian, who expressed no surprise at our arrival, though it is extremely probable that he had never seen a European before. He made us some coffee, and we slept the sleep of the just, rolled up in our wraps on the floor, too utterly worn out to take any notice of or interest in entomology.

Mustapha's three ponies had never turned a hair.

After about four hours' sleep, we resumed our journey, and reached Sistova exactly four hours behind time, which was accounted for by the delay of our own making. Mustapha had reckoned his time with the greatest accuracy.

As we had anticipated, the river was open, and we had no difficulty in chartering a boat to take us across to the other side. There we had to sleep the night, but early the next morning we started, this time (oh ! luxury of locomotion) in a carriage with springs, for Giurgevo, where we arrived after a perfectly uneventful and uninteresting drive behind horses who possessed no idiosyncrasies at all, in plenty of time for our train, having been fifty-one hours in making about one hundred and sixty miles, including a night's

rest, at a cost of about twelve pounds between us.

The first person we ran up against in the railway station was one of our fellow passengers, whom we had left in the *Locanda* on the Bulgarian side of the river two days before.

The ice had broken up with unparalleled celerity, and communication by boat had been established *that very afternoon*. He enquired with stolid but irritating politeness if we had enjoyed our drive !

There was not a bone in either of our sorely battered and shattered frames which did not positively ache to brain him on the spot but we refrained, and added yet another stain to the character of humanity by asserting that we wouldn't have missed it for anything. Yet Mustapha and his ponies are entitled to rank as an "experience."



BANNOCK-BURN.

AFTER all any place is good enough to hear a good story in and why not the stern-sheets of a comfortable row boat, which is being pulled against the stream, and a fairly strong stream at that, on the Harrison river in British Columbia ?

A well-filled basket of fish lies at your feet, and, conscious of having done your duty nobly in the trout-catching line, after a hard day's work, you find yourself in that condition of physical lassitude which impels you to enter no protest against somebody else doing all the hard work.

This somebody else is an entertaining companion. Bred and born on a farm in Ontario, he has been in the North-West rebellion, as a teamster, with General Middleton's corps at Batoche, and vividly describes the action at that place and a dozen other incidents of the campaign, in a style which would have done no discredit to the pen of Archie Forbes, the prince of

correspondents. After the rebellion was over, he had drifted out further west, trying one thing then another, till he finally found himself located in British Columbia, and was now pursuing the useful, and I trust lucrative, calling of butcher.

Not that the element of sport, usually wanting in this avocation, was absent in his case. As a rule, I believe, pole-axing is the method employed in doing to death the noble beasts that grace our festive board, but my friend had a soul above such slaughter, and, whether from choice or necessity, he hunted his beasts, often wild as mountain sheep, on an Indian reserve. To judge from his accounts, he must have had, on occasion, rare good sport. He paid the Indians so much per pound for dead meat, and after stalking the animal, sometimes for many hours, he put a bullet through its forehead with a Winchester repeater when he got a shot at it. He skinned and quartered it where it lay, leaving the hide, the hoofs and the offal behind ; which is but another instance of the lordly fashion wherein we treat odds and ends in the Far West, which are accounted valuable in other countries.

Away up in the Qu'Appelle Valley, some years before, he was "baching" it on his homestead, and one day had driven into town with his horse and buggy. The mare took fright at something and bolted, the consequence being that he was, as he described it,

"eternally smashed up." The doctor whom he consulted could do nothing or very little for him, and left him with the comforting assurance that he was badly injured internally, and that there was very little chance of his ultimate recovery. His head, too, had suffered considerably from contact with a telegraph pole, and altogether he was in a very sorry plight ; though, to look at him now and note the way in which he was putting the boat along against a four-knot current, it seemed difficult to believe that he had ever known a day's illness in his life.

This was his story ; I will give it in his own words as nearly as I can remember them :

"It was haying time, and I had got a pretty good crop. I had promised a 'pal' of mine, who was away at the time and whose land was next to mine, that I would get his hay in for him that day, and as he had helped me the week before, I meant to keep my word, especially as there were signs of bad weather about.

"I had asked a couple of other fellows to lend me a hand for I was feeling as bad as it was possible for a man to feel, and doubted whether I should be able to manage the job alone. I worked hard all the forenoon and about mid-day I went in to the shack to get some grub, when I found I had run out of baking powder.

"I went over to the next house, about half a mile off, to borrow some, as I wanted to bake some bannock

for my two "pals," whom I expected to turn up at any minute.

Watkins, the owner of the shack, was not there, so North-West fashion, I promptly helped myself. In his cupboard were two tins of Price's baking powder, one about a quarter full and the other unopened. I naturally took the former and went home. I was feeling so bad that I paid no particular attention to the cooking operation, but baked my bannock as quickly as possible, and then went out to get in some more hay.

About half an hour afterwards, my two "pals" turned up; but not, as I found to my disappointment, to stay and help me. They were bound to a neighbouring farm, where they had got a job, and a good paying one; and I naturally did not feel like standing in their way by reminding them of their promise. I pressed both of them, however, to stay and have something to eat, but they refused my offer, as they were pressed for time, so I went in and had my bacon and bannock alone. The bannock tasted uncommonly bitter, but I felt so wretchedly ill that I did not think twice about it, though the taste effectually spoilt my appetite.

Very shortly after I had eaten it, I began to feel a horrible buzzing sensation in my head and burning in my throat and chest. My feet felt so light that I could hardly keep them on the floor. I felt an

unconquerable desire to go and lie down in my bunk, but at the same time, an impulse, even stronger, told me I had better not.

Through it all only one thing seemed to be perfectly clear to my mind and that was that alive or dead I'd have to get in that hay. It weighed upon me like a nightmare and though I could barely see my way before me, I staggered down to the hay bottom, determined at all costs to get the better of my weakness.

Well, I got the hay in, though Heaven knows how I managed it. I worked for three solid hours and the sweat simply poured off me. When I was through I remembered that a friend of mine, who was going away that very day, had promised me a Gordon setter, if I would call for it at a certain time. So I hitched up and drove to his place about six miles off. There I got the dog, and tied him under the wagon, and drove home ; feeling by this time a little better, although by no means myself again.

As the dog did not seem to take kindly to his new quarters, I thought the best thing I could do was to feed him. I tore the bannock in pieces and gave him about half of it which he greedily devoured. Then I went out and unhitched the horse.

When I came back again friend dog was lying on his back, with his four legs in the air, as if he had been frozen solid.

Then for the first time it flashed across my mind what had happenen. I had dosed myself with strychnine instead of Price's Baking Powder ; but greatly to my astonishment, instead of being dead as a door nail like the dog, I was by this time feeling considerably better.

I went across to Watkin's and found that he had come home. I asked him, in an innocent kind of way, if he could loan me a little baking powder, where-upon he went to his cupboard and opened it.

" Good God," he said, turning round with a scared face, " its gone."

" What's gone ? " I said, though I knew well enough.

" The strychnine ; some derved fool has taken it."

" I am the derved fool," I said ; and then I told him all about it. He was mighty glad to find I had got off so easily ; and when I jossed him about the folly of keeping poison in a baking powder tin, he replied by saying that the man who didn't know the difference between strychnine and baking powder deserved to take the consequences.

That is four years ago now and all I can tell you is that from the very day that I nearly poisoned myself, I have been growing steadily better. That dose of strychnine just did me all the good in the world, and now I am stronger and heartier than ever I was.

When I told the doctor about it he said that the

poison had many valuable properties and there was no doubt about it that the tremendous dose I had taken, which was strong enough to kill a dog in ten minutes, combined with the extraordinary exercise I had taken immediately afterwards, had had the effect of breaking the neck of my trouble whatever it was. I guess I just sweated the blooming thing right out of my system. It was a case of kill or cure. The dog got the one and I got the other."



AFTER SEVEN YEARS.

SEVEN long years had he laboured, even as Jacob served for Rachel though at a far less interesting pursuit. His lines had been cast in the Imperial scullery and his occupation consisted in washing the Imperial dishes and scouring the Imperial pans.

Not a soul-inspiring pursuit it may be argued, albeit the dishes he washed were of the finest ware in the world and the pans he scoured—copper-bottomed every one of them—shone like burnished gold.

Ovaghim worked hard all day and often far into the night for they did things on a grand scale in the Imperial Household, and there were many hundred plates and platters to be cleaned in the Imperial scullery during the course of the twenty-four hours.

During *Ramazan*, the Mahomedan fasting month, they may well have run into the thousands, for then every night as the sun went down his Imperial master

kept open house in accordance with the custom of his religion and his race, and no one of whatever country or creed who did him the honour to call at the palace was sent empty away.

You, incredulous reader, would have been equally welcome with the rest. You had merely to walk in as one of the crowd who thronged the palace gates, to sit down crossed legged in which position you would probably be as much embarrassed to know what to do with your feet as are other people what to do with their hands. It is astonishing how painfully obtrusive one's appendages become on assuming this lowly attitude for the first time, comfortable above all others though it is when custom has got your feet into shape.

Once seated at the hospitable board of the *Ifthar* (evening meal) a low circular table about fifteen inches high, it would be entirely your own fault if you got up again before you were thoroughly satisfied with as square a meal of four-and-twenty courses as you ever enjoyed.

You would revel in the *pilaf* (rice boiled as only Orientals know how to boil it, every grain separate and firm though in no sense pulpy) served in the form of a huge pyramid, with here and there like currants in a gigantic pudding, a quail or a *beckfigue* (small bird which lives exclusively on figs and is the most delicious mouthful). Then the baked meats served with quinces, the minced meats wrapped in

vine leaves, the lambs roasted whole and stuffed with chestnuts, the—but I refrain or I shall not have enough room even to allude to the fruits which might prove even more to your taste—pomegranates, peaches, grapes, melons, (two of the last often going to a horse load, which you will naturally refuse to believe but I can't help that), currants large as nuts preserved in syrup, all their seeds removed with the point of a needle and the shape of the fruit retained absolutely intact. Such a *menu* on the whole as you never saw before, and if you did not exercise that discretion which cometh only of experience might possibly wish never to see again.

One of the features of the entertainment which would certainly offer the charm of novelty would be the absence of knives and forks, plates and spoons. You would have to eat with your fingers with such precarious assistance as you might derive (after carefully watching the marvellous dexterity of your neighbours) from a flat piece of bread.

It sounds the reverse of inviting, I admit, but so do many things to which we are unaccustomed. After all it is not worse and certainly not more dangerous than eating with your knife, and the percentage of civilized beings who do that would astonish you.

You might also take exception to the fact that no liquor of any kind is served during the repast. You would get nothing but water, brought perhaps from

some celebrated spring miles away on mule back, for Orientals are as great connoisseurs in the matter of the water they drink as ever were Britishers in the matter of wine. But of water you would get the very best and in any quantity, wherein you would have a distinct advantage over less favoured mortals in other towns I could mention.

All this however is by the way and has nothing to do with Ovaghim who is slaving away for dear life in the scullery a quarter of a mile off from the Palace: for the Imperial kitchens are located at such a distance as to obviate the possibility of a malodorous whiff of boiled cabbage or fried fish ever assailing the Imperial nostrils.

Ovaghim is not in the best of spirits and truly he has cause for dejection. He is the victim of hope deferred and his heart is very sick.

This is the cause of his despondency. He has applied in due course for leave of absence to go home to Armenia and get married to the girl he left behind him seven long years ago. Azpatsoon is not according to European ideas a thing of beauty and of joy, but she is according to Ovaghim's. He regards her as most of us regard the object of our affections entirely from his own point of view. Perhaps it is as well that this rule prevails.

Ovaghim has been promised that he should have leave. He applied nearly eight months ago now and

was told that his *yol-teskéré*, an all important consideration, (practical equivalent of passport), together with his back pay would be forthcoming the following week and this assurance has been repeated so often and has hitherto been so barren of result that Ovaghim has begun to lose heart. He knows that without money and without his *yol-teskéré* it will be useless for him to attempt his journey of twelve hundred miles and he is almost at his wit's end to know what to do.

Suddenly a brilliant idea strikes him. How about a petition direct to His Majesty? Has it not been said of old time that the humblest suitor is sure of his request being granted if only he can succeed in placing it in the Imperial hands. He will consult old Hadji Achmed the *Kiatib* (scribe.) He is a good and kind-hearted man and at least will advise him, perhaps, even, he will consent to indite Ovaghim's petition and forego his usual fee under the circumstances.

The idea brings light and sunshine to Ovaghim and on the very first opportunity he carries it into effect.

Hadji Achmed at first shakes his head dubiously somehow he does not think it will work. He is older and more experienced than Ovaghim and he knows that theory however excellent does not always work out in practice. He doubts not that the petition if made and presented will be granted but the difficulty as he points out to Ovaghim will be to present it.

Hadji Achmed will gladly draft the letter but how in the name of the Prophet does Ovaghim intend to deliver it? But that is Ovaghim's affair. He will find out the way if Hadji Achmed will only do his part.

So Hadji Achmed the *Kiatib* allows himself to be persuaded. He was young once long years ago and though he is a Mussulman and Ovaghim only a Christian he supposes that where woman is concerned the difference between them is not worth talking about; wherein he is undoubtedly right.

So Hadji Achmed the *Kiatib* sits him down one evening when Ovaghim's work is over and leans up against the trellis vine at the back of the Imperial Kitchen. He draws his brass ink pot and pen-holder from his girdle and lays it on the ground beside him; he takes out a reed pen; mends it carefully with his pen-knife; he takes a sheet of paper from his capacious pocket; makes the sign of *Allah* at the top and tears off a tiny corner at the left-hand side. The rectangular shape of the paper would otherwise be perfect and nothing is perfect save *Allah* alone.

He gets all the facts from Ovaghim. How he has worked in His Majesty's service for seven long years. How Azpatsoon is waiting for him far away in Armenia and wonders why he does not come. How his pay is over due and the long promised *yol-teskéré* is still delayed. All this and more also Hadji Achmed the kind old *Kiatib* indites in

language which Ovaghim does not pretend to understand for it is Arabic of the very purest and is addressed to the Sun of Suns, the Star of Stars, the King of Kings and other superlatives which only Oriental imagery can supply.

When it is finished Hadji Achmed hands it over to Ovaghim and hopes that it may be fruitful of result, and jubilant in his new found hopes Ovaghim bids him good-night promising to let him know how matters progress.

Ovaghim can scarcely sleep for excitement. How when and where to present the petition is the question which banishes sleep from his eyes.

Ha ! he has it. After the mid-day meal His Majesty walks in the garden, through the avenue of planes above the water and for an hour alone. He will feign sickness, make any excuse to absent himself from the kitchen on the morrow. He will hide behind one of the plane trees and then he will throw himself at the Sovereign's feet as he passes with the petition in his hand. What easier ? Then Ovaghim sleeps the sleep of the just and dreams of Azpatsoon in the wilds of his native Armenia twelve hundred miles away.

Never has he worked so hard as on the morrow and when mid-day comes unobserved he slips away and hides him in the avenue of planes. There are soldiers about in every direction for the palace is well guarded

owing to the constant dread in which His Majesty lives of the knife or pistol of the assassin.

But by stooping here and dodging there Ovaghim eludes them all. He waits long and wearily, so long that he begins to fear that his quest for that day at least will be in vain, and that yet again will he have to run the gauntlet of detection.

But suddenly he catches sight of a tall and solitary figure coming with weary step and bent head in the direction of the avenue of planes.

It is His Majesty; Ovaghim knows it rather by inference than as a fact, for the opportunities enjoyed by scullions of associating with crowned heads are no greater in the East than in the West, and Ovaghim has never set eyes on his sovereign before. But it can be no one else, for no one else is allowed to walk through the avenue of planes on pain of death.

Slowly that bent figure comes along. It is dressed in black and its face looks worn and haggard, as if upon its shoulders there rested many cares. One hand is hidden in the breast of a tightly buttoned coat, the other leans upon an ivory headed cane.

As it passes the tree behind which the Armenian lies in waiting Ovaghim knows that his chance has come.

He springs forward, drawing out his petition as he does so.

The figure starts back at sight of him with a cry of

alarm, mistaking the act for one of deadlier motive.

A revolver shot breaks the stillness of the avenue of planes, and then——there is a vacancy in the ranks of the Imperial kitchens.



TARLETON LITTLETT'S MISSION.

A TERRIBLY bumptious person who had been nowhere, seen nothing, and who yet knew everything. That was the main trouble we had with him. You couldn't tell him anything he didn't know by intuition far better than you did by experience, although his residence in the country totalled about as many days as yours did years. Some people are built that way and as a rule they are not popular.

So it was with Tarleton Littlett. How he came to represent the English company which had sent him out to the East to negotiate with the Government for a *firman* (Imperial concession tantamount to an act of Parliament in constitutional countries) to enable them to run a line of steamers in connection with the railway they already owned and operated, we could never understand. It seemed to us that the English company had made an unfortunate selection in their

representative in this instance, for Littlett was entirely lacking in the all important faculty of making friends.

In a week he had antagonised everyone, official or private individual, with whom he had been brought into contact.

The experience of others was as nothing to him. It was all nonsense, he maintained, talking about the time things took and the difficulties which had to be surmounted in dealing with the authorities. He didn't believe a word of it.

He was armed with letters of introduction to Her Majesty's Ambassador, Her Majesty's Consul-General, and he wanted to know what these officials were for if not to protect British interests, and see that justice was done to British subjects by the Unspeakable. (For aught I know to the contrary he is still in quest of this interesting information, though the episode I write of occurred full many a year ago and he may since have been gathered to his fathers.)

Littlett's position was apparently unassailable. The *firman* under which his company operated the railway in question distinctly provided that, on due and proper application, permission would be given to the holders of the concession to connect the terminus of their line with the capital—a most desirable consummation of all our hopes, for existing arrangements were the reverse of convenient. We therefore wished

Littletitt, not so much for his sake as for our own every possible success in his undertaking, though at the same time we did not feel he was going to work in the right way.

When Littletitt asked us if anything could be clearer than his rights under the existing concession we were fain to admit that they were plain as the rising sun. But the rising sun is sometimes obscured by fog, and it was in this condition we feared (I might almost go to the extent of saying that some of us hoped, so meanly were we constituted) that sooner or later Mr. Tarleton Littletitt would find himself.

He laughed us all to scorn when we pointed out that he would be acting wisely in his own interests if he did not reckon too confidently upon dates and entered into no binding engagements with his company without leaving himself plenty of margin in point of time.

In vain we assured him that things, at any rate in the East, were not always what they seemed, and that Oriental negotiations were, of their very essence, of protracted nature. He gave us clearly to understand that he knew his own business, and that when he wanted advice he would ask for it. As for *backsheesh* it was a positive abomination. The man who gave bribes was as bad as the man who took them, and he positively marvelled how any one with any claim to consider himself a Britisher could so lower himself as

even to allude to such an iniquity. Besides as it happened in his case there was no possibility of any question of the kind arising. He had received in the course of his very first interview with the Grand Vizier that dignitary's assurance that everything was in perfect order and that his *firman* would be forthcoming immediately.

This was quite enough for Littlett, who immediately cabled home to his principals that the object of his journey had been achieved. He was extremely angry not to say rude that night at the club when the Wag remarked that he would have made a far more profitable investment had he expended the money spent on the telegram in whiskey and cigars. Littlett neither smoke nor drank and he said so. But the Wag replied that that didn't make any difference which made him more angry still. He was quite speechless with indignation when the Wag told him that he would be lucky if he got the *firman* in six months at a cost of £3,000.

In a week from that day the Grand Vizier was out of office. The entire change of ministry which this deposition involved afforded great amusement at the club to everyone except Littlett who was furious. He abused the powers that were in no measured terms, and even threatened to write to the *Times*, but we begged him not to. We implored him to think of the consequences which a communication of irate nature

from his influential pen might produce. Wars, revolutions, occupations by British fleets, European disruptions and who knows what. Our arguments fortunately prevailed and though Littlett knew so much he somehow failed to grasp the fact that we were chaffing him.

But his troubles were only just beginning. About six months after the accession of the new Grand Vizier, when he had spent a small fortune in telegrams fixing dates for the issue of the *firman*, and counter telegrams explaining the reason for the delay, which as time went on became more and more unsatisfactory to the London Board, he received a visit from an Armenian emissary of doubtful appearance who requested the honour of an interview.

He asked in fluent English if the *chelibi* wanted to get his *firman*.

What on earth had this to do with the seedy-looking Armenian? queried Littlett.

Merely this. The Armenian was Sharki Bey's "man," and the bey *Effendi* had sent him to say that the *firman* would or rather could be forthcoming by a certain date provided the *chelibi* paid him (the Armenian) then and there the sum of one thousand pounds.

"What?" screamed Littlett, fairly beside himself with rage. "A thousand pounds!" and he drove the seedy-looking Armenian with righteous indignation from his presence.

He drove off post haste to the Porte and laid a formal complaint against Sharki Bey, one of the Palace chamberlains, with the Grand Vizier, for as bare-faced an attempt at blackmailing as was ever perpetrated upon a British subject.

His Highness was extremely polite. He assured Littlett that there must be some mistake for from what he personally knew of Sharki Bey—one of the most trusted chamberlains of His Majesty—he felt confident that no such proposal could ever have emanated from him. His Excellency's name had evidently been taken in vain by some understrapper at the palace, and the *Effendi* had done quite right in dismissing him with the ignominy he deserved. He would however look into the matter at once. By the way what was the name of the Armenian that he might make a note of it and have the man promptly dismissed?

But Littlett unfortunately in his indignation had omitted the formality of taking down the gentleman's name, and he was consequently unable to give His Highness this most desirable information, which His Highness most deeply regretted. Everything as far as His Highness knew was going satisfactorily and the *firman* might be "out" any day.

Littlett came back to the club in a calmer frame of mind. We however were not nearly so polite or consoling when he told us of the episode as the Grand Vizier had been.

The Wag coolly said he'd lost another month and that the next Armenian who paid him a visit on behalf of Sharki or any other bey would raise the price on him by at least twenty, it might be fifty, per cent.

Littlettitt ought to have been photographed at this juncture. He would have looked well in the chamber of Horrors.

The Wag's prognostications were more than fulfilled. Six weeks later another and still more seedy Armenian called upon Littlettitt on precisely the same errand, with this difference that the price was £1,400. If this money were handed the Armenian without receipt the *firman* would be forthcoming that day week.

Littlettitt had that morning received a letter from his company which was the reverse of complimentary. They were getting anxious at the delays, the more so that they had on the strength of his representations as to the issue of the *firman* contracted with another corporation, and would be in a terrible fix if the concession were not forthcoming by a certain date. They gave him clearly to understand that they were dissatisfied with his negotiations and hinted at unpleasant alternatives. If money was required, despite his former assurance that none would be needed, he had better say so and draw for the amount. They believed that *backsheesh* had on occasion to be given, but in any case and under any circumstances the *firman* must absolutely be got and at once.

All this was as gall and wormwood to Littlett the omniscient. But he came to terms with the still more seedy Armenian and arranged that the money should be forthcoming the next day.

It was unkind of the Wag who, when he was not employed in making caustic remarks to concession hunters at the club, put in his time as one of the cashiers in the bank, but when Littlett went to get his money, he observed, "Glad to see you, old man. I shall have the pleasure of cashing another draft for you before you get through with this business."

"Great Scott," said all that remained of Littlett, faintly, for there was scarcely any of the original left. "Don't say that. You oughtn't to chaff a fellow over this infernal business. Really you oughtn't. It's too bad."

But the Wag had several old scores to pay off and he gave no quarter.

Littlett was horribly dejected all through the week. He paid the £1,400 to the Armenian and waited developments in fear and trembling.

On the morning of the day on which the *firman* had been promised an unkempt and unshaven Greek wearing a black flannel shirt appeared at his rooms.

His command of English was limited but Littlett managed to gather what he meant without any great difficulty. The *firman* was out and would be delivered to him that afternoon against payment of another

£2,000. He could call at an office, the address of which the Greek gave, at four o'clock with the money. Some one would be there with the *firman* and would be prepared to give it up against payment of the amount which was to be brought in bank notes made up in two packages of a thousand pounds each. The *chelib* was to come alone.

Littlett felt during this recital as if he had lived on mustard and water for a week ; but time pressed and something told him that there was no help for it.

He paid another visit to the bank and on this occasion, to his credit be it said, the Wag refrained from making any remark.

Four o'clock found him with the two packages of bank notes of a thousand pounds apiece at the appointed *rendezvous*.

On a divan smoking a *chibouk* sat an aged man, irreproachably dressed in the purest of white burnouses and looking the picture of Mahomedan benevolence. He greeted Littlett with the sweetest of smiles and the profusest of salaams. On the divan by his side lay an official looking document which Littlett instinctively recognized.

The aged man pointed significantly to it with one hand and held out the other with an air of polite expectancy. Littlett, whose progress of late in the paths of Oriental diplomacy had been simply marvellous, understood. He produced the two packages of

notes and albeit with rage in his heart handed them over to the aged man. The aged man, with the gravity befitting the emissary of a chamberlain, untied the bundles and verified their contents. Then with a profound salaam he tendered the long looked-for *firman* to Littlett.

No word was spoken during the interview, so Littlett told us afterwards, though as the Wag subsequently observed there are occasions when silence is golden, and this was evidently one of them.

Next day the *firman* was on its way post haste to London, and that was the last we saw of Tarleton Littlett for some time to come.



THE GIFT OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

ONLY a village seamstress, say you ! What of it ? Seamstresses have hearts like some of their sex and object on occasion to coercive enactments on the part of their parents and guardians. Especially in matters matrimonial. At any rate Euphrosyne did and that is the point of my story.

She revered and respected her father, as all maidens whether of her own nationality, which happened to be Greek, or any other, in theory should and remarkably few maidens in practice do.

She never even thought of questioning his authority until it happened to run counter to her own inclinations and then Euphrosyne kicked like a steer—I beg pardon, I should say a heifer. It may not be a refined expression or a lady-like accomplishment, but that is just what Euphrosyne did. And all on account of a trifling difference of opinion between herself and her father on the subject of the latter's future son-in-law.

He had made up his mind in favour of Mihalé, for Mihalé from every point of view save only Euphrosyne's was an eminently desirable *parti*.

He was old enough to be her father ("grandfather," Euphrosyne contemptuously remarked), for his age was within five years of that of old Giorgghi himself, 63 last birthday. Moreover he was extremely well fixed financially. He drove a trade and prospered well in horn and hoof; made lots of "oof"; for he was the village butcher ("Ugh!" said Euphrosyne), and was generally accredited with the accumulated savings of forty years. ("As if I wanted his money," protested Euphrosyne.)

But whether Euphrosyne wanted his money or not it was soon perfectly patent that old Giorgghi did. Old Giorgghi, you must understand, was hopelessly involved; the old gentleman, though he had long since been compelled to retire from his own honourable profession of shoemaking, owing in the first place to a rooted disinclination to work, and in the second to some trouble which affected his eyes, had borrowed money from Mihalé the butcher. Be it also known that he had not expended the amount he had borrowed either wisely or well. He had speculated in railway lottery bonds and had lost it all. He had not speculated in real estate, but this was solely because there did not happen to be any real estate agents within 10,000 miles of him, otherwise the consequences

might have been infinitely worse than they were. As it was they were bad enough.

Giorghi had mortgaged everything he possessed to Mihalé the butcher, and finally, rank old speculator that he was, like the impecunious mandarin "to settle accounts one day he sold him his daughter's hand."

The bargain was driven and the terms arrived at after a more than usually stormy interview between debtor and creditor, and in consideration of the fair Euphrosyne (for it goes without saying she was fair, though as a matter of fact she was a pronounced brunette), to be presently conveyed in due and proper process of matrimony according to the rites of the Orthodox Church (and they *are* rites with a vengeance) by Giorghi to Mihalé, and in further consideration of the sum of one hundred pounds to be paid immediately by Mihalé to Giorghi it was agreed that bygones should be bygones and Mihalé should give Giorghi a receipt in full as regarded all matters of past accounts upon his wedding day.

The arrangement was highly satisfactory to both parties, for, as you will doubtless have imagined ere this, Mihalé "long had loved her from afar," though he had never ventured to breathe his love.

Giorghi promised faithfully that he would never speculate again. Not that he had the slightest intention of keeping his word; he rather entertained ultimate and nefarious designs upon those accumulated

savings of Mihalé's, but he swore solemnly nevertheless, and Mihalé, in that brief period of lunacy which invariably precedes matrimony, believed him.

But it sometimes happens, as it did on this occasion, that *l'homme propose et la femme dispose*. Giorgghi had reckoned without his host, for when he got home there were ructions galore.

Euphrosyne was furious but worse still she was immovable. She wouldn't marry Mihalé, nasty fat old thing, if there wasn't another man left in the whole world. She didn't care if her father was stonebroke or its Greek equivalent. She said many unpleasant and moreover undutiful things which rankled in old Giorgghi's mind. She accused him of being a lazy old good-for-nothing, who was content to live on his wife's and his daughter's hard-earned wages.

This was perfectly true. Old Giorgghi was afraid she would get on to the subject of the railway lottery bonds, but she refrained, to his great relief, though this was only because she didn't happen to know about them. Otherwise she would undoubtedly have made matters more unpleasant still.

Old Penelope her mother, the village washerwoman, rotund as her own washtub, strove to pour oil on the troubled waters, but instead she added fuel to the flame, and for a time old Giorgghi wished he had never been born or at least had never been married.

Penelope was good natured ; extremely fat people

always are, but they are often extremely weak and their personal courage is frequently disproportioned to their size. She was four times as big as her husband and daughter combined and she stood in mortal terror of both of them.

Giorghi finding that it was useless to press matters at this juncture wisely determined to "bide a wee," knowing full well that he could enlist the good offices of Penelope his wife on his side as soon as ever he could secure a private interview. Besides he had begun to suspect that there was a rival in the case, and if so great circumspection would have to be observed.

"Well, well, my daughter," he said at last, "we'll say no more about it," and Euphrosyne, her head miles in the air, flung out of the room like an offended Empress.

It did not take many minutes to elicit from Penelope, shaking like a jelly mould under the fire of her lord's cross-examination that Euphrosyne's objections to the proposed match were due not so much to personal dislike to Mihalé as to personal affection for Andoni.

Now Andoni was anything but a desirable *parti*. He had no money at all, he was only a boatman who earned barely enough to keep himself, let alone a wife.

Old Giorghi heaved a sigh of relief. "Not a very formidable rival," he thought, and he instantly set to

work evolving schemes such as the soul of the Greek loves.

He dismissed Penelope with injunctions to assure Euphrosyne that her father would never try to coerce her affections and that she was perfectly free to accept Mihalé or refuse him as she pleased. On no account however was she to be told that her father knew of her *penchant* for Andoni. Penelope promised secrecy and instantly told Euphrosyne all about it.

Next day Giorgi hired Andoni to row him down to Stamboul, and during the voyage which lasted some three-quarters of an hour, he made Andoni a "business proposition." Would he consent to leave the village and allow it to be publicly announced that he was engaged to be married to somebody else, somewhere else, person and locality of no importance, in consideration of ten pounds?

Andoni's eyes twinkled, but Giorgi who was shortsighted did not notice it, nor, should it be remembered, was he aware of the fact that Euphrosyne and Andoni had met the night before "in the gloaming," which had he but known it would have made all the difference in the world to his calculations.

Andoni said he would like to think the matter over and Giorgi said there was no hurry for a day or two. Andoni refused to take any money for his fare, an act of magnanimity which Giorgi greatly appreciated.

Andoni rowed home as fast as he could and had a

long interview with Euphrosyne which they both mightily enjoyed after the time-honoured fashion of anti-matrimonial lunatics.

That evening Andoni saw Giorgi in the village *café* and told him that all things considered he had decided to accept his offer of the morning provided he doubled the amount.

Giorgi did not like it but finally agreed. The sum was paid out of Mihalé's hundred, and the next day the villagers were astounded to hear that Andoni had left for the Dardanelles, his native place, to be married to a girl he had left behind him long years ago. A most shameful proceeding it was generally thought, seeing the marked attention he had paid for so long to Euphrosyne.

She, poor thing, as was but natural, was inconsolable. She used to take long walks that she might commune with her grief. Sometimes it happened that the sun cast one shadow, sometimes two. The only people who appeared in any way pleased at Andoni's departure were the ex-shoemaker and the butcher.

Eventually things worked out just as Giorgi in his wisdom had anticipated. Continual dropping will wear away a stone and parental solicitation finally produced an impression upon the now chastened heart of Euphrosyne.

Though Andoni had only been gone two weeks she had sufficiently recovered from the blow her youthful

affections had received to consent to marry Mihalé, and when her father fixed the date a month hence on the very day decided by the bargain she offered no objection, but she made one indispensable stipulation. She must receive a dowry of £200, to be paid her in hard cash before the ceremony, otherwise Mihalé, like the primest of his prime beef, "might go hang."

In vain her father expostulated and explained his position. He hadn't got two hundred cents in the world, let alone two hundred pounds, and didn't in the least know how he was going to pay for her *trousseau*.

It was all one to Euphrosyne. He might borrow it from Mihalé for all she cared, but that was her *ultimatum ultimatum* and the sooner he made arrangements accordingly the better.

Giorgi took counsel with Mihalé. The latter didn't like it a bit. What on earth did the girl want with £200? It was absurd to spend that amount on her *trousseau* and Mihalé, who, as his accumulated savings amply demonstrated, had a frugal mind, would be no party to such extravagance.

Finally it was agreed that the money should be paid by Mihalé but only on his wedding day. He wasn't going to take any chances.

Euphrosyne demurred somewhat at this arrangement, but as a special concession to her father allowed

herself to be persuaded, provided that the money was paid before the ceremony.

Giorghi undertook on Mihalé's behalf that the bridegroom should bring it with him, and that it should be paraded with the rest of the wedding gifts.

In due course came the wedding day, or rather the wedding eve, for Greek marriages are always celebrated at night and in the house of the bride. Euphrosyne, though a trifle pale, was voted a lovely bride. The bridegroom was not beautiful but he was solid, albeit literally and figuratively in a melting condition for the weather was terribly hot.

Conspicuous amongst the presents was a small silk bag containing the two hundred pounds, "the gift of the bridegroom," and everybody remarked what an extremely fortunate young woman Euphrosyne was, and how luckily it had turned out that that little affair with Andoni had terminated as it did.

The priests, three of them, for this was no ordinary wedding, mark you, had arrived and were donning their vestments. In another five minutes the ceremony would begin and Euphrosyne would be in a fair way towards becoming Mrs. Mihalé. I say in a fair way, for your Greek wedding lasts anything from one to four hours.

The bride left the room to give the final touches to her toilet, and strangely enough no one remarked

that the small silk bag containing the gift of the bridegroom had gone with her.

She slipped a long cloak over her bridal dress and all unnoticed in the general jollification walked quietly downstairs into the arms of Andoni, who was waiting for her with his boat at the quay immediately under the bridal windows.

She never came back.



OVERLOOKING THE TENNIS COURT.

THE tennis court was crowded for it was the club "At Home" day and whenever we received, which we did the first Thursday in each month, our visitors, let me venture to assure you, had no cause to be otherwise than truly thankful. The ground lay in the gardens of an old palace overlooking the Bosphorus at the bottom of a succession of stone terraces—some half dozen in number towering one above the other—creeper clad and vine laden. It possessed one great advantage in addition to the natural beauty of the situation, that of perpetual shade—at least in the afternoon.

The attendance was unusually large for we offered on that particular Thursday the attraction of a real live Princess who was on a visit at one of the embassies. It is astonishing what a Princess can do in the way of drawing a crowd and Her Highness proved a veritable magnet. I do not think we ever had so many people before. Her Highness moreover was young and pleasing to the eye which all Princesses are

not, and extremely affable, which very few Princesses are—at least to the average mortal. On the whole our “At Home” was a gigantic success. Excellencies in the shape of Ambassadors and their wives were at a discount, and I noticed with pain that the spouse of a Consul-General and the *Chargé d’ Affaires* of a third-rate power, of whose presence on ordinary occasions we should have been inordinately proud, were actually kept waiting—disconsolate in the background—for a second cup of tea.

But the Princess monopolised everybody’s attention as Princesses will.

Several of us had known her some few years previously on the occasion of a former visit, but that was before she was a Princess. Then she held her head scarcely higher than anybody else, and we all thought she was going to marry Jim Hamilton, the first lieutenant of H.M.S. *Gazelle*. Appearances certainly pointed that way, but you know how deceptive appearances are. It all came to nothing, however, and so unfortunately did poor Jim Hamilton. He had as good a chance of being an admiral as any man of his standing in the service. But instead of flying his flag he’s in the coast-guard now, somewhere in the north of Scotland, I think. The reason? Well, I scarcely know. You’d better ask the Princess.

“Love all,” cried the umpire, and the set of the day began.

It was most unfortunate that the Prince couldn't come. Had he been there too our cup of happiness would have overflowed. It might have been too much for us.

But as Her Highness explained, the Prince (only a foreign one, not of the Blood Royal), was a terrible sufferer from gout—"Forty—Love," cried the umpire)—whence it will be inferred that he was not so young as the Princess, which is perfectly true.

He never went anywhere nor did anything, which may possibly convey the impression that he was a grumpy old frump, which is also correct. But this didn't in any way prevent Her Highness from enjoying the best of all possible times. *She* went everywhere and saw as little of her princely consort as she conveniently could. With a gouty toe he couldn't very well hop round after her ; the proceeding would to say the least of it have been undignified, and a Prince who lacks dignity lacks all.

Don't imagine for a moment that the Princess told us these things. She did nothing of the kind. But one doesn't require to be told everything in so many words, and thank Heaven, there is still something in the world, though not much, left to the imagination.

"Deuce," cried the umpire, and I thought of the Prince's gouty toe.

Her Highness rivetted all her faculties upon the game for nearly five minutes and then her attention

began to wander. She wasn't very much interested, I'm afraid, in our crack players who were simply excelling themselves in her honour. She had very likely seen lawn tennis far better played elsewhere in the course of her travels, and I daresay in her heart of hearts she didn't think much of the performance.

A wooden house of no great pretensions but picturesque in the extreme reared its gable roof over the wall to the left of the tennis ground, and from a window in the second story a full view of the game could be obtained.

At the window, which was open, there sat a bearded man in his night shirt, watching each stroke with intense interest and applauding even more vociferously than any of us each brilliant service or return, with this difference, however, that his plaudits were offered in Greek.

Immediately behind him stood the figure of a woman, her hand resting upon his shoulder.

"Love—Forty," cried the umpire.

The man at the window attracted the notice of the Princess.

I happened to be standing near her and she turned towards me. (I was one of those who had known her before she was a Princess and that made all the difference, as you will readily understand.)

"How delightfully interested that man is. Who is he? How terribly ill he looks."

I told the Princess that the man at the window was a Greek. That he had met with an accident which had injured his spine many years before. That he was bedridden and that his only amusement was to watch us play tennis ; that he had mastered the principles of the game from simply watching it from his window, and that it was the keenest disappointment of his life when nobody turned up to play.

Her Highness's sympathy was immediately aroused.

"How extremely interesting," she said as she handed me her teacup. "No more, thanks," and she gazed at the man in the window through the daintiest of *pincés-nez* whereof the tortoiseshell handle was at least eighteen inches long.

"And the woman behind him—what a sweet face she has ! Is she his wife or his sister ?"

I told Her Highness that the woman was his wife and that she had never left his bedside for eleven years.

The Princess's eyes grew round and large in wonderment. Perhaps she was thinking of her own unremitting attendance on the princely toe. Who knows?

Just then there came violent gesticulations in my direction from the window.

"Is he making signs to you ?" said the Princess.

"I think he is," I replied. "I generally pay him a weekly visit and last week I couldn't go. If your Highness will excuse me I——," and I began to move away.

To my astonishment the Princess rose too and the expression on her face seemed to have undergone somewhat of a change.

"Do you think I might come too?" she asked. "I should like to know that man and his wife. Would she mind? Should I be intruding? Does she ever receive visitors?"

I said I was certain she would be only too delighted if the Princess would honour her with a visit; that it would be a great kindness to both of them; that I should be only too happy to present my bedridden friend to her. You know the sort of thing one would say.

"Don't make mention of my title," she said. "I think I would rather you called me plain *Madame* if you don't mind. You can say a friend of yours, can't you?"

I said that I could, that I was entirely at her command in this or any other particular.

Together we wound our way across the stone terraces, through the vines and the creepers in the direction of the gable-roofed house.

My friend in the window saw us coming and waved a frantic welcome.

"I am bringing you a visitor," I called out, and he instantly drew in his head. Even bedridden people don't always care about being taken *à l'improviste*.

Fortunately the game was a very exciting one and

every one was watching it intently, so that less notice was taken of my abduction of the lioness than I expected. I heard of it afterwards, however.

“'Vantage,” cried the umpire as we left the court.

“Tell me about your friend,” said the Princess. “I am very much interested in him,” then she added as if to herself, “Eleven years. It is marvellous.”

This was the story I told the Princess, in briefest outline for we had not far to go.

Vassili had been a clerk in the bank and was engaged to Zoitza, a pretty Greek girl some ten years younger than himself. They waited and waited in hope that his promotion would come and that they would be able to be married. It came at last and he received an appointment as book-keeper in one of the provincial agencies of the bank. He went to take possession of his new post and to secure a home for his bride. On a certain date he was to return and they were to be married on the morrow.

The evening before her wedding day bad news came to Zoitza. Her lover had missed his footing on the slippery deck of the steamer which was bringing him back to her, had fallen down an open hatchway and was seriously injured. They broke the tidings as gently as they could but Zoitza naturally imagined the worst. She insisted upon going to see him at once, and they took her to the hospital where Vassili was lying.

"Tell me the truth, I pray you, as you love your children," she had said to the doctor, "will he die?"

"I will tell you the truth as you ask me to," replied the doctor. "He will not die—but—"

"But what?"

"He will be paralysed from the waist downwards for life, and will never get up from his bed again."

"*'O Theos einai kallos*" (God is good), said Zoitza, simply. "He might have taken him from me," and they let her go in to Vassili's room.

That day week they were married and many people said Zoitza was a fool.

Then she went to the directors of the bank and the result of her interview was that in consideration of Vassili's past services and of the circumstances of the case they agreed to allow him a small pension.

The prediction of the doctor came true. Vassili never left his bed again. Though eleven years had elapsed since the accident he was still a hopeless cripple, and all through those eleven years Zoitza had never left his side.

The Princess had a far away look in her eyes, and any remark she may have been about to make was cut short by the appearance of Zoitza herself brimful of smiles and sunshine as she opened the door to us.

I presented her to the Princess as to a friend of mine, and she was overwhelmingly glad to see us.

"But why did you not come last Thursday?" she

said to me reproachfully. "Vassili looks forward so to your visits ; and there was no tennis. He misses the tennis. You see it is his only distraction," she added apologetically to the Princess.

Then we went upstairs to see Vassili. He looked, as the Princess had remarked from a distance, wretchedly ill, but he was marvellously bright and cheerful, as he always was. Hanging suspended from the ceiling over his bed was a small trapeze within easy reach of his hands. By taking hold of this he could manage to change his position by a few inches and this was all the exercise he ever got. His bed fitted into the window so that he got a full view of the tennis court and the terrace upon which tea was served.

"What a game, eh !" he said, after the ceremony of introduction was over. "What a splendid game. But we won. They only got two games the last set," and he rubbed his poor thin hands in exultation. "Zoitza, quick, coffee and cigarettes, or would the Madama prefer sweetmeats ? Bring sweetmeats too," and he prattled on with all the grace and charm of the East.

Zoitza presently appeared with refreshments of her own preparation, and while we regaled ourselves with coffee and sweetmeats she sat in her chair at Vassili's bedside and gave us her comments on the game and all the grandees amongst the spectators.

They were not in the least *géné* at receiving a visitor for many people went to see them, and few I imagine

ever came away without feeling the better for their visit. Such love as Zoitza's, such resignation as Vassili's are not met with every day.

The conversation was carried on in French which the Princess spoke to perfection.

Her Highness was positively charming, as Highnesses can be sometimes. I thought I had never seen her to such advantage. Vassili and Zoitza were enthralled by her descriptions of her travels and captivated by all the nice things she said to them.

We stayed fully half an hour and when Her Highness said "good-bye," she kissed Zoitza.

"It was very good of you to go and see those poor people," I said as we left the house. "You have given them real——"

"Don't," said the Princess, and I almost fancied there was a break in her voice.

"Game," cried the umpire as we entered the court. I have a kind of idea that the Prince won.

[FINIS].

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